

FAME A FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

TRADING TOM; OR, THE BOY WHO BOUGHT EVERYTHING.

*By A SELF MADE MAN.
AND OTHER STORIES*



"Whoa!" roared Tom, tugging at the reins and maintaining his balance with great difficulty.
"Whoa, you beast!" He managed to swerve the frightened animal away from the imperilled girl, and she arose in time to escape further danger.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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TRADING TOM

OR; THE BOY WHO BOUGHT EVERYTHING

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—A Smash-Up On The Road.

"Anything to sell, ma'am?" asked a stalwart, shrewd-looking lad of about eighteen, bringing his rig—a sorrel horse, and a light wagon filled with various kinds of truck and a small collection of new tin-ware—to a stop before a small cottage facing on the country road on the outskirts of the village of Woodland. "I'll buy anything from a darning needle to a sheet anchor, and I'll pay spot cash."

"Dear me," said the woman of the house, "do you really buy anything?"

"Anything and everything, ma'am, that has any value. I'm not in business for the fun of the thing, but to make a living. What I buy I sell again at a small profit."

"Well, well; you're an honest looking boy. You don't look as if you'd cheat a person like some people do."

"Cheat, ma'am! I hope not. I have found that honestly is the best policy, though an insurance policy is a pretty good thing to have in the house."

"What might be your name?"

"It might be Smith, but it ain't. It's just plain Tom Trevor, otherwise known as Trading Tom."

"Trading Tom!" ejaculated the woman.

"Yes, ma'am. Any kind of a trade goes with me. If you've got anything in the house that you don't want, and I can make use of it, I'll name a figure on it, and you can suit yourself about parting with it. You can have the cash, or, if you fancy any of the tinware I've got in the wagon—brand new and up-to-date stuff it is—you can pick it out and I'll name a figure on that. The difference, one way or the other, we'll settle in the coin of the republic. That's fair, isn't it, ma'am?"

The woman looked into the wagon and saw several things that would fill a long felt want in her humble home, but she wasn't sure she'd be able to make a trade for them.

"I've got a flat-topped bureau that belonged to my husband's mother once upon a time. If you think——"

"I'll look at it, ma'am," interrupted Tom, in a business-like tone, jumping to the ground and hitching his horse to the white picket fence.

She led the way up to the garret and pointed

the article, which was of ancient vintage, out to him.

There were three wide drawers in it, and Tom pulled them out in turn.

He saw that it was made of Spanish mahogany, but as the thing stood there wasn't any particular demand for such things.

"Well, I guess fifty cents is about the limit, and it might prove a white elephant at that," he said, looking at the woman.

"Why, I've heard that it cost more'n fifty dollars."

"I've no doubt it did when it was new and in style, which was long before I was born. Those glass handles, ma'am, aren't in use any more. They'd have to come off and brass ones put in their place. Then the wood would have to be scraped and a coat of French polish applied or nobody would look at it. Some other tinkering would have to be done to make it kind of shipshape. All that would take time and a little money, and when it was fixed up it would have to be sold cheap to make it move quickly."

"I guess you make out pretty well, young man, for you're a slick talker."

"Talking, ma'am, is part of my business, and comes natural to me. Is it a trade? I don't believe you'll get a better offer."

"Seems like giving it away," replied the woman, reluctantly; "but I ain't got no use for it and it takes up room."

"Anything else you want to get rid of, ma'am? Old magazines or newspapers that lumber up your place? I'll relieve you of them at a nickel a hundred pounds. It isn't a princely sum, I'll admit, but junk men aren't paying as much as they did for waste paper."

Tom had spied a pile of old weekly story papers thrown carelessly against one of the unfinished walls, and was prepared to take them if she said the word.

The woman didn't want them any longer, so Tom said he'd carry them down and weigh them.

"What else, ma'am?"

"I suppose you ain't got no use for that parrot cage?" she said doubtfully, pointing at the article, which was covered with dust.

"Hardly, ma'am; but we'll call it a dime at a chance."

That was all the woman had to sell, so Tom

carried the bureau down and loaded it into his wagon, the paper following with the bird cage, and Tom announced that there was seventy-five cents coming to her.

Then the woman began to dicker for the tinware she wanted. The things came to eighty cents, and Tom let the odd nickel go, which pleased the woman greatly, for she felt she had the best of the trade.

Tom noticed a pan of freshly made doughnuts, and the sight made his mouth water.

"Those are bang-up doughnuts, ma'am," he said. "In all my travels I don't think I've seen the equal of those doughnuts. I guess you must be an uncommon fire cook, ma'am."

The woman felt greatly flattered at the praise the boy bestowed on the doughnuts, and hastened to present him with half a dozen.

"I'll pay for them, ma'am," he said, intending to give her a nickel.

The woman wouldn't listen to that, but told him he was welcome to them.

A minute or two later he was driving toward the village with half a doughnut between his teeth.

Presently he heard the "honk—honk!" of an automobile behind him.

The sorrel horse heard it, too, pricked up his ears and grew restive.

As the noise grew louder the horse showed signs of fright.

Whiz! went by the auto with an ear-piercing screech of its horn.

That was the last straw with the animal. He shied, then sprang forward and got a gait on.

"Whoa, January!" shouted Tom, standing up and pulling on the reins, as the stuff in the wagon commenced to dance and jingle. The horse paid no attention, but continued his headlong career down the road. Tom saw that he couldn't stop him for the present, but he made the animal's flight as hard as possible by tugging on the reins with all his might.

As they flew around a turn in the road, Tom saw a couple of girls walking together right ahead of him. He yelled lustily to attract their attention, but the clattering of the horse's hoofs and rattling of the wagon had already warned them of danger in the rear.

They turned around in a startled way and beheld the runaway vehicle bearing down on them like a Western cyclone. The girls screamed with terror and both made a spring for the nearest hedge.

"Whoa!" roared Tom, tugging at the reins and maintaining his balance with great difficulty. "Whoa, you beast!"

Crash! The forward axle gave way close to the wheel and Tom only saved himself from a bad fall by springing forward on the horse's flanks.

Clinging to his precarious hold like a leech, he worked forward and clapped both hands over the animal's eyes.

The horse lost his gait, stumbled and went down, Tom alighting as nimbly as a circus rider.

The animal was on his feet in a moment, but his young owner now had him under subjection, and speaking soothingly to him, and patting his nose, gradually quieted him down.

Moving the rig closer to the fence Tom tied the reins to a post and then gazed ruefully at

the wreck of the wagon, which was a hired one, and at the various bits of his property scattered back along the road.

CHAPTER II.—Introduces the Van and Chick Slivers.

The two girls, now recovered from their scare, approached on the other side of the road.

Tom bowed politely to them.

"Sorry that I frightened you, young ladies," he said, with a smile that attracted their favorable notice; "but I did the best I could not to run you down."

"I am sure you did, and we don't blame you for the shock we got," said the tallest one. "It's too bad you have met with an accident. What are you going to do?"

"Make the best of a bad situation," replied Tom. "Things can't always be expected to go smooth in this life."

"I've seen men, and boys, too, swear and behave very ugly over a mishap not as bad as this. Really, you are behaving very nicely, and we are very sorry for you."

"Thank you for your sympathy, miss——"

"Hutchings. My name is Alice Hutchings."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Hutchings," said Tom, bowing.

"This is my friend, Annie Carr."

"Glad to know you, Miss Carr. Now I will introduce myself. My name is Tom Trevor, but I'm known to the public as Trading Tom."

"Are you a traveling pedlar?" asked Miss Hutchings.

"Not exactly, miss. I'm a traveling trader. I buy everything of any value that people want to get rid of, and I pay either in cash or in such merchandise as I carry around with me."

"But you can't carry much in that wagon," she said.

"No, I only hired that for the day of the blacksmith in the village yonder who is fixing a new tire on one of the wheels of my van."

"Oh, then you have a larger wagon?"

"Yes; quite a good size box vehicle. It once belonged to a traveling circus. The two horses also belonged to the circus, though they were not performing animals. They are called January and February. That's January there."

"January and February!" laughed Miss Hutchings. "What singular names for horses."

"Kind of different from the ordinary, I'll admit; but I didn't christen them, and as they answer to their names, I couldn't very well change them."

"Well, we won't detain you any longer, Mr. Trevor," said the girl. "You've got to pick your things up. If you will permit, we'll be glad to help you."

"Oh, I wouldn't think of troubling you young ladies. I thank you very much for your kind offer, but it won't take me but a few minutes. Only the lighter articles bounced out of the wagon," replied Tom. "You live in the village, I suppose?"

"Miss Carr does," replied Miss Hutchings. "I live in Exeter, and am visiting her for a little while."

"I shall visit Exeter about the end of the week;

but I suppose I won't have the pleasure of meeting you there, even if you should be home at that time. It is quite a large town."

"I don't know. I am going home on Friday. Should you have the opportunity, I should be pleased to have you call at my home. I live at No. 254 Jefferson street."

"Thank you for the invitation, Miss Hutchings. I shall lay over Sunday in Exeter, and it would give me great pleasure to pay you a brief visit," said Tom.

The young ladies bowed and walked on while Tom started to pick up the stuff that had tumbled out of his wagon.

He then took the liberty of appropriating a fence rail which he roped securely to the broken axle, so as to hold the end of the wagon up that he might proceed to the village.

Unhitching January from the post, he ordered him to "Git up," and walked beside him with the reins in his hands.

In the course of fifteen minutes he came in sight of the blacksmith shop near which his van stood.

The van was a highly ornamented affair, red and gold being the predominating colors, but the gilt was badly tarnished, and the paint and varnish greatly faded, from long exposure to the elements, so that it no longer attracted the eye.

A canvas sign was tacked on each side of the van bearing the following inscription:

"TRADING TOM—The Boy Who Buys Everything.

Has for sale

Popper's World-Renowned Liniment,
for Man and Beast.

A guaranteed Cure for Burns, Sprains, Bruises,
Lameness, etc.

Very efficacious for Lumbago and Rheumatism.
Small bottles, 25 cents. Large bottles, 50 cents.

On the driver's seat, dozing in the sunshine, reclined a small freckled-faced youth of perhaps fifteen years.

His name was Chick Slivers, and he was Tom's companion and general assistant.

Chick was a typical city youth whom Tom had picked up in Chicago. The young trader had rescued Slivers from the clutches of a drunken stepfather who was living on the lad's earnings as a bootblack and lambasting him whenever his receipts were not satisfactory.

Tom carried a mattress and blankets in the van, so that boss and assistant slept together and saved the price of lodgings.

Sometimes they took their meals at a cheap hotel, sometimes at a restaurant, and often at a farmhouse along their route.

The young trader brought his rig to a halt before the blacksmith's door.

"Hello!" exclaimed the disciple of Vulcan, coming forward and looking at the broken axle. "Been having a breakdown, I see."

"Sorry to say I have. My horse took fright at a red auto and made a break of it. If you'll assess the damage I'll pay for it."

"Considering the circumstances, I guess I won't charge you anything, young man. You can pay me for putting on that tire, and we'll let it go at that," said the blacksmith, who was a genial man and liberal in his views.

Tom thanked him and inquired how his assistant had put in his time while he was away.

"He helped me quite a bit around the shop and I took him home to dinner with me. I live in that cottage across the way. He sold several bottles of your liniment to farmers who were attracted by the sign on your van. I reckon I'll take a fifty-cent bottle myself," and the man tendered Tom the price.

"Keep your money," said Tom. "I'd like to see myself taking any money from you, after you've let me out of paying for the damaged axle."

Tom opened the doors at the back of the van, got a large bottle of Popper's infallible preparation and handed it to the blacksmith. The slamming of the van door aroused Chick, who sat up and looked around.

"Hello, Tom, got back, have yer? What's the matter wit' the waggin?" he said.

"Had a breakdown along the road," replied the young trader.

"Dat was hard luck," said Chick, descending from his perch in order to help his companion unload the wagon and stow the stuff in the van, which was already fairly full of a miscellaneous assortment of truck.

Tom having decided not to move on till the following morning, January was, with the blacksmith's permission, turned into his pasture to browse with his companion, February, who had been enjoying that luxury the greater part of the day. As it would not be dark for over two hours yet, Tom determined to put the time to good advantage. So he got out a couple of flat steel scrapers and put Chick at work on the body of the Spanish mahogany bureau he had bought of the woman down the road that afternoon, while he tackled the drawers himself.

They worked so industriously that by the time the sun had set behind the distant hills, the entire thing was ready to be gone over with emery paper before the application of the first coat of polish.

The blacksmith was ready to quit for the day, and he invited Tom and his companion to take supper with him.

Tom accepted for Chick and himself, and while the blacksmith was locking up his shop, he and Slivers lifted the bureau into the van and locked the doors.

After the meal was over the blacksmith took his pipe and went out on the front porch to enjoy his evening smoke, and the boys followed him there.

"How long have you been traveling around this way, Trevor?" he asked.

"About a year," replied Tom.

"Are your parents living?"

"No. I'm an orphan and wholly dependent upon my own exertions for a livelihood."

"How came you to go into this business of yours?"

"I kind of took to it naturally. I first went out as assistant to a patent medicine man. After a three months' experience, we had a scrap and he left me stranded in a town about two hundred miles west of Chicago. There I fortunately made the acquaintance of the man who owned the outfit that now belongs to me. He took a fancy to me, and I went traveling with him. He was returning to Chicago. We reached the Windy City in about six weeks. Hardly had we

arrived when he was taken down with pneumonia and was carried to a big hospital. He rapidly grew bad and when the doctor told him that he couldn't recover he willed his traveling outfit to me, as well as all his money, which wasn't a whole lot. He died, and after he was buried I decided to try my luck as a trader on the same lines he followed, so here I am, and now you have the whole story."

Tom and his host talked for an hour longer, then the blacksmith said he guessed it was time for him to go to bed.

The boys bade him good-night and, going across to the van, turned in themselves, leaving the doors wide open, as the night was quite warm,

CHAPTER III.—A Pair Of Undesirable Citizens.

Whether it was the warmth of the night, or because he had eaten more than customary for supper, Chick Slivers, who usually slept like a top, did not rest comfortably.

His slumbers were disturbed by unpleasant visions of his former hard life in Chicago, and about midnight he woke up.

The night was still, save for the hum of nocturnal insects and the monotonous croak of frogs. He hadn't more than got his eyes open before he was aware that two men were talking close to the open doors of the van.

"There ain't no use of disturbin' these chaps," said one of the men. "They're only boys, and cheap skates at that. I reckon a ten-dollar bill would be a fortin to 'em."

"Oh, I don't know," replied his companion. "A chap who announces that he's ready to buy anything must have money around him, and money is what you and me want about this time."

"Ho! That's a big bluff, that sign. I know what them tradin' Toms are. They never give nothin' for what they git, that is, nothin' worth mentionin'. Even then, they don't pay no cash, but trade off tinware and knickknacks for what they pick up. The only time they ever have money is when they reach some city and git rid of the stuff they bought. Then they blow most of it in over some bar. I know the hull caboodle of them chaps. I never know'd one yet it paid to go through."

"That's all right, Barney, but this chap sells patent medicine. He ought to have some cash in his jeans."

"What's the use of meddlin' with small fry when we've got somethin' better on hand? When a feller is a high-toner like you and me, we ought to stick to our line, 'cept when it pays to do the sneak act. I'll bet these here chaps are as crooked in their trade as we are in ours. I never know'd a tradin' Tom yet who wouldn't pick up everything he could get his hands on. Now this crib we've arranged to crack tonight is a likely sort of place to make a haul. The family is well fixed from the looks of the place, and it ain't a hard proposition to get around. We kin easily force one of the cellar windows, and once inside we ought to be able to clean the crib out as slick as a whistle."

"I ain't got no fault to find with your argument, Barney, but as it's a bit too early yet to begin operations in that quarter—for it ain't

more'n half-past twelve—I thought we might just as well put in part of the time goin' through this outfit, since all is fish that comes to our net."

Although one of the rascals appeared to be opposed to molesting the occupants of the van, Chick wasn't sure but his companion might talk him into it.

He cautiously altered his position by degrees until he got a full view of the doorway.

Then he located the exact position of the crooks. They were standing just out of sight at the corner of the vehicle near one of the rear wheels. There was a smell of tobacco in the air, which showed that one, or both of them, was smoking. Chick decided to arouse Tom. Placing one hand over his mouth he shook him into wakefulness.

"Don't make a sound," Chick whispered in his ear. "Dere are two crooks outside near de door, and I ain't sure but dey may try to rob us. Jest listen to dem talkin'."

Tom was on to the situation at once.

"How long have they been there?" he asked his companion in a low tone.

"Dunno. I woke up about five minutes ago and heard dem talkin'."

"What makes you think they're crooks?"

"I heard dem say dey was goin' to break inter some house 'round here ter-night and clean it out," replied Slivers.

"If they intend to do that there isn't much doubt as to what kind of men they are," said Tom.

"One of dem wants to go t'rough us fust, as he says it's too soon to tackle the house; but de other chap doesn't think we're wort' robbin'."

Tom chuckled. Then he reached under the head of the mattress and pulled out a navy revolver.

"If they meddle with us they'll get a warm reception," he said, grimly.

"Yer t'ink we're asleep," whispered Chick. "De chap what objects to tacklin' us said that if we had anyt'in' to lose we wouldn't have de doors wide open as an invitation for anybody to step in and pinch our property."

"Seems reasonable. They wouldn't find much on us if they did go through our clothes. They'd have a nice job trying to find my funds, I'll bet, even if I gave them permission to hunt around."

The boys stopped talking and gave their attention to the two rascals outside. After discussing the project they had in view of robbing one of the best houses in the village, one of them consulted a silver watch he carried and announced that it was one o'clock.

"It's safe enough now, I guess, to move on the crib," he said. "These country folks generally go to bed early. The folks at the house ought to be sound asleep by this time. Those cellar windows are a great institution. They come in mighty handy for us. A jimmy'll open one in no time at all, and then all we've got to do is to lower ourselves inside and we're in the house."

"We'll keep our weather eye liftin' just the same, for we can't afford to take no chances," said the man called Barney.

"Of course we can't. Well, if you're ready we'll make a start."

Barney was ready. The men stooped, picked up their carpet-bag and walked off down the road leading into the main street of the village.

CHAPTER IV.—“Hands Up!”

The moment the pair of rascals made a move the boys sat up and looked after them.

“Chick, we’ve got to follow them,” said Tom, shoving the revolver into one of the pockets of his jacket.

“What for?” asked Slivers in some surprise.

He was pleased that the men had gone off without interfering with the van, and did not see the necessity of butting into their business.

“We must save that house from being robbed.”

“And maybe get into a heap of trouble doin’ it,” replied Chick, who wasn’t in favor of his companion’s suggestion.

“It’s our duty to try and prevent those rascals from accomplishing their purpose. However, if you don’t want to come with me you can stay and watch the van. I’ll undertake the matter alone.”

“No you don’t,” replied Chick, decidedly. “If you’re bound to foller dem chaps I’m wi’ you.”

“Then come on before we lose sight of them.”

They sprang out of the van and Tom locked the door. Keeping close in the shadow of the hedge, they proceeded to follow the crooks to their destination. The men turned up the second cross street they came to, and then the boys hurried their pace lest the rascals should get away from them. When they turned into the cross street, they saw the men walking leisurely along scarcely half a block ahead. In a short time they were in the heart of the residential part of Woodland. Big shade trees bordered the street on both sides and threw a gloom along the narrow sidewalk.

At length the men stopped in front of quite a pretentious-looking residence. The boys took refuge behind the trunk of one of the trees and watched them. The crooks, after a sharp look around the neighborhood, entered the grounds.

“Come on,” said Tom. “That must be the house they have planned to rob.”

The boys hastened forward, and caught a fleeting view of the men disappearing around the back of the dwelling. They stepped into the grounds and followed the route taken by the rascals.

Tom motioned Chick to hold back as they drew near the corner of the house.

Glancing cautiously around the end of the building Tom saw that there was a two-story ell in the rear. The two men were kneeling beside one of the windows under the ell. Tom heard the sharp crack of wood giving way under the pressure of a jimmy. The rascals soon succeeded in forcing the window open, leaving an opening sufficiently large for them to pass through, one at a time.

One man entered feet first and dropped out of view. His companion waited till he had made an investigation of the door leading up from the cellar. The door proved to be an ordinary wooden one, held by a common bolt. This was regarded by the professional housebreaker as a small obstacle, so he returned to the window and told Barney that everything was serene.

Barney passed the two carpet-bags to him, and then followed himself.

“They’ve forced their way into the cellar

through one of the windows,” said Tom to Chick.

“What you goin’ to do now?” asked Chick.

“If I knew where the head constable lives I’d send you to his house, and then the rascals could be nabbed with the goods. As it is, I must attract the attention of the people of the house, and let them know that there are thieves on the premises. I don’t want to alarm the crooks though, if I can help it. Here, Chick, take this revolver and stand watch near that cellar window yonder. Keep to one side of it, and if the rascals attempt to get out cover them and keep them in the cellar,” said Tom.

“All right,” replied Slivers, who felt able to stand off anybody with the revolver in his hand.

Tom then hurried to the front of the house, and, picking up a handful of gravel, flung it at one of the second-story windows.

The first throw produced no results, though the gravel made quite a noise on the pane, but the second brought a man clad in pajamas hurriedly to the window. Tom saw him peering out and made motions to him. The man threw up the lower sash and asked him, in no pleasant tone, what he wanted.

“Two thieves have just broken into the cellar of your house and intend to rob you, sir,” said Tom.

“Who are you, young man? I don’t seem to recognize you.”

“I’m a stranger in this village, and my name is Tom Trevor. I’m a traveling trader, and I have a van out near the blacksmith shop.”

“Tom Trevor!” repeated the gentleman, to whom the name sounded familiar. “Are you the boy who nearly ran over my daughter and her friend on the county road this afternoon?”

“I nearly ran over a Miss Hutchings. Are you Mr. Carr?”

“I am. How came you to discover that two men were breaking into my house at this hour in the morning?” asked the bank cashier, suspiciously, for he thought the circumstances very singular, to say the least.

“My companion and myself were woke up by the two men discussing their plans near the back of my van. We listened to them, and found that they were going to break into and rob some house in this village. We couldn’t tell which house they were aiming for, but I determined to try and prevent them from carrying out their purpose. So when they started for the village we, my assistant and myself, followed them, and they led us here. They are somewhere in your house at this moment.”

“My gracious!” ejaculated Carr, who was now persuaded that Tom was telling the truth.

“If I knew where the head constable lived I’d send my companion after him, but I don’t, and it isn’t likely that Chick could find the house if directed to it, as the village is unfamiliar to him. Maybe you have a telephone in the house by which you could reach the constable.”

“I have, but it’s downstairs in my library, where those rascals may be at this moment,” replied the gentleman in a tone that showed he hardly knew what course to take in order to block the thieves.

“You’ve got a revolver in your room, haven’t you?” asked Tom.

“Yes. I’ve got one under my pillow.”

"Better get it. I'll get mine from my assistant, then I'll climb up on this porch and help you out all I can."

Tom rushed back to where Chick crouched on guard over the cellar window.

"Hand me the shooter. I'm going into the house by way of the porch and the second-story window. Look around the yard and get a piece of wood you can use for a club. Should one of the rascals stick his head out of that window you can give him a rap. The advantage is all on your side."

While Chick went looking for a piece of wood suitable for the purpose in view Tom returned to the front of the building, climbed the porch with the agility of a monkey, and presented himself at the window, where Mr. Carr stood revolver in hand, waiting for him.

The cashier helped him in at the window and then asked him what plan he thought would be the best to adopt. Tom kicked off his shoes first.

"Follow me, Mr. Carr. Perhaps we can catch these rascals off their guard and capture them. I suppose you have many articles of value downstairs to attract their attention?"

"Yes. My silverware is locked in a cupboard in the dining-room. No doubt they have tools that will enable them to get at it easily," said the cashier.

Tom opened the door leading out on the first landing, and, going to the head of the stairs, listened for sounds that would indicate the presence of the crooks below. All was silent, however. Taking the lead, he started cautiously downstairs, holding his revolver ready for instant action, and followed by Mr. Carr.

"Can we reach the library from this hall?" Tom asked the owner of the house.

"No; we'll have to pass through the parlor to reach it."

"How do you reach the dining-room from here?" asked Tom.

"That door there opens into it."

Tom tiptoed over to it and opened it cautiously.

There was no light there nor any sign of the thieves.

"I suppose there is a door opening out of the cellar?" said the boy.

"Yes, into the kitchen."

"Is it kept locked?"

"There is a strong bolt on it."

"I don't hear them, so I think they haven't forced their way out of the cellar yet. Let's look into the parlor and library. If they're not there you can telephone for the constable."

Tom entered the parlor. It was dark and tenantless. He and Mr. Carr then passed on to the library. There was no one there, so the cashier walked over to the telephone.

"I'm going into the kitchen, Mr. Carr. Is it at the back of the dining-room?"

"Yes. You'll reach it through the pantry passage."

Tom hurried away. Opening a door on the farther side he looked into a narrow passage. At the farther end was the kitchen door, and Tom opened it with due caution. The thieves were not there, but Tom heard the sound of a small saw at a door which evidently led into the cellar. The door had given the crooks a great deal more trouble than they had anticipated.

They failed to push back the bolt with their instruments because the bolt was a strong one, and fitted snugly into its socket. They wasted nearly half an hour over it, and then had to get out a center-bit and bore a number of holes around the bolt.

Then Barney inserted a thin steel saw and proceeded to cut from hole to hole. The job was about completed when Tom appeared on the scene. He saw a lamp standing on a table. Striking a match, and shading the glare with his jacket, he lighted the lamp and turned it low. Then he waited, revolver cocked, ready for business.

Presently the piece of wood to which the bolt was attached fell out on the floor, the crooks pushed the door open and entered the kitchen. Tom at once turned up the light and covered them with his revolver.

"Hands up, both of you, or I'll fill you full of holes!" he cried in a tone of determination.

The two rascals started back aghast.

CHAPTER V.—Tom And The Two Crooks..

"Throw up your hands, I say," repeated Tom.

Although they saw that they were opposed only by a boy, his resolute demeanor and the cocked revolver intimidated them.

So they raised their hands and muttered imprecations under their breath.

"Back up against that wall," ordered Tom.

The crooks backed up against the wall and did not dare lower their hands.

"Can't we square this thing somehow?" asked Snuggs, persuasively.

"I guess not. You've broken into this house to rob it. You first forced one of the cellar windows and then you forced that door. That's evidence enough of your intentions, isn't it?"

At that moment Mr. Carr stuck his head in at the door and was rather astonished at the scene he beheld. It looked dramatic to his eyes—Tom holding the two rascals at bay with his revolver. Tom heard the cashier as he stepped into the room, but he didn't dare take his eyes off the crooks.

"Is that you, Mr. Carr?" he asked.

"Yes. I see you've got the rascals cornered. You're a brave young fellow," replied the cashier.

"Did you reach the constable all right, sir?"

"Yes. He's coming right over with help."

"Open the kitchen door and call my assistant in here, will you, Mr. Carr?"

"Certainly," replied the gentleman, and in a few moments Chick was in the room.

"Have you a piece of clothes-line handy that we can use for tying these men?" asked Tom.

The cashier got a long piece.

"Now, Chick," said Tom, "just search the pockets of those chaps and see if they have any weapons. If they're a couple of unfortunate chaps, as they claim to be, they won't be armed; but if they're professional crooks they probably will be."

Tom warned the fellows not to make any resistance, as he didn't intend to take any chances with them, so they submitted with very bad grace to be searched by Chick. A revolver was found in the hip pocket of each, and in addition Snuggs had a small dirk and a slung-shot.

"That's quite an arsenal for a pair of unfortunates to carry around," said Tom, in a sarcastic tone. "What excuse have you for doing it?" Don't you know that it's against the law to carry concealed weapons?"

Neither Snuggs nor Barney made any reply. They simply glared at Tom in no friendly way. It would probably have gone hard with the boys if they could have got the upper hand on him for a few minutes. Tom told Chick to bind their hands behind their backs, and they had to allow the operation to be performed, for they could see that the young trader meant business.

"Hand them chairs, Chick, so they can sit down," said Tom. "They might as well be comfortable till the constable comes and takes charge of them."

"You'd better let us go, young fellow," said Snuggs, with a vindictive look. "If you don't you're likely to regret it."

"I'll take my chance of that. I don't think you'll have a chance to try and get back at me for many moons. This job will send you to State prison for several years, and when you get out it will be hard to tell where I'll be. I may be dead or in Europe or on my wedding tour," chuckled Tom.

The two men scowled at him.

"You'll have to get a new door, Mr. Carr," said Tom, picking up the piece of wood to which the bolt was attached and holding it up for the cashier's inspection. "This is the way they got around the bolt. Bolts on wooden doors don't bother the modern burglar much. Here are the carpet bags I told you about," continued the boy, handing the articles into the kitchen from their roosting place on the cellar steps. One of the bags contained a small kit of up-to-date burglar tools; the other had wearing apparel and some articles of food in it. By the time they had examined the contents of the two bags the constable drove up in a light wagon with two of his day assistants.

"So you've caught the rascals; have you?" he said on entering the kitchen.

"The credit of their capture is due to this young man," replied Mr. Carr, indicating the young trader. "He is as nervy a young fellow as I ever met. Let me introduce you to each other. Mr. Brown, Thomas Trevor."

"Glad to know you, young man," said the constable heartily, offering his hand. "You are a stranger to our village."

"Yes; I only arrived yesterday morning, and I shall depart as soon as I can get away. The capture of these chaps is bound to detain me here, for I'll have to appear as a witness against them," replied Tom.

"That's right," replied the constable. "Might I ask where you hail from?"

"From Chicago, though I haven't any home there. The truth of the matter is my home is my van. I'm a sort of a rolling-stone—always on the go."

"A traveling salesman, I suppose?"

"Not exactly. I'm a traveling trader. Professionally speaking I'm Trading Tom—the boy who buys everything."

"You buy everything, do you?" laughed the constable.

"Everything that's worth anything."

"I've got a house and lot I'd like to sell you, then."

"I'm afraid I couldn't carry that off in my van, so it would hardly be worth my while to trade with you."

The constable laughed, and turning to his two men told them to bundle the prisoners into the wagon. In a few minutes the wagon drove away to the lock-up, which was close to the constable's house. Tom then turned to Mr. Carr and said he guessed, now that their mission had been brought to a satisfactory end, he and Chick would return to the van to finish their night's rest. The cashier thanked him for his valuable services in frustrating and capturing the thieves, and assured him that he would consider himself under lasting obligations to him. Tom told him that he was welcome, and that as far as he was concerned he believed he had only done his duty.

"Well, I'll see you at the magistrate's office during the morning," said Mr. Carr; "and I shall expect you to dine with me so that I shall have the chance to introduce you to my wife and daughter, though you have met Annie already in an informal way. Both she and Miss Hutchings spoke very nicely about you, in spite of the fact that you nearly frightened them to death when your horse ran away."

"Much obliged for the invitation, Mr. Carr, and I may delay my departure from the village long enough to accept your kind hospitality," replied Tom, thinking of Alice Hutchings' bright eyes, and rather glad of the chance to see her again.

The boys then took their leave of the cashier and returned to their van. Fifteen minutes after their arrival both were sleeping soundly, with the stars of heaven shining brightly in at the open doors of the old circus vehicle.

CHAPTER VI.—At the Examination.

The village blacksmith was an early riser, and when he had plenty of work on hand had his shop open by six o'clock. When he crossed the road on this particular morning he glanced into the van and saw the boys still sound asleep. At seven his wife rang the bell to call him to breakfast. The blacksmith, not knowing that the boys had been up part of the night, thought it time to arouse them so they could breakfast with him as arranged the night before, so he went to the van and shook them.

"You fellows sleep like tops," he remarked as the boys sat up. "It's seven o'clock. Time you were stirring."

"We were up part of the night, Mr. Jones, that's why we're late in waking up," replied Tom.

"What kept you up? There wasn't any excitement around this neighborhood that I know of."

"Burglars kept us up," replied Tom.

"Burglars!" exclaimed the astonished blacksmith.

"Yes. Chick and I captured a couple at the residence of Mr. Carr."

"That's more than a mile from here in the village. How came you to go there?" asked the blacksmith, clearly surprised at Tom's statement.

"I'll tell you the story after I've washed up."

"You can tell it at the breakfast table. Come along. You'll find a basin and towel outside the kitchen door."

Tom and Chick followed the hospitable black-

smith across to his house and were soon seated at the breakfast table with a bountiful spread before them. Then Tom between bits related the events of the night to the blacksmith and his wife. They were amazed at the incident, for such a thing as a burglary in Woodland was as rare as hen's teeth.

"You are certainly a nervy and resolute young chap," said the blacksmith. "The cashier's house would no doubt have been cleaned out of valuables but for you."

"I guess they'd have got away with the goods all right if they hadn't made the mistake of stopping beside my van and discussing their plans. One of them wanted to go through our clothes, and probably the van as well, but the other didn't think we were worth the trouble," laughed Tom. "Had they tried it on they'd have got more than they bargained for in the shape of a bullet in their hides. I'm always prepared for hard characters who attempt to molest Chick and me, whether they be tramps or what not."

"When you go to the magistrate's office this morning you'll find you have made a reputation in the village, for by that time most everybody in Woodland will have heard how you caught the two burglars at Mr. Carr's home. The magistrate is bound to compliment you, and no doubt Mr. Carr will reward you handsomely."

"Oh, we're not looking for any reward. We are satisfied with having done our duty to the community."

"Well, it's lucky for Mr. Carr that you were in the neighborhood. I have no doubt had the burglars been successful his loss would have been considerable."

After breakfast Tom got the bureau out, removed the old-fashioned glass handles and treated it to a first coat of polish, which made it look a whole lot different to what it had been when it came into his possession. Later on he intended to buy suitable brass handles and put them on the drawers to give it a modern appearance and make it saleable at a fair price. As the polish wasn't dry when the time came for Tom and Chick to go to the magistrate's office, the young trader got permission from the blacksmith to take it over and leave it on his back porch out of harm's way.

When Tom and Chick reached the magistrate's office they found a big crowd on the outside, for the news of the attempted robbery of Mr. Carr's house had circulated all over the village by that time, and curiosity was on tiptoe to see the burglars. They were represented as desperate fellows, who had been armed with revolvers at the time of their capture, and the villagers were just as anxious to see the boy who had caught them unassisted. The moment Tom and Chick appeared they became the focus of all eyes. They needed no introduction, for everybody seemed to recognize Tom at once as the hero of the occasion. He looked like a boy of nerve and resolution, who would just as soon tackle a burglar as not. The big outer office where the magistrate held court when it was necessary was jammed to the doors, and it was impossible for the boys to get in by the main entrance. A villager, seeing their dilemma, volunteered to pilot them around to the rear, where a door admitted them to the railed-in enclosure reserved for those whose presence was required in the court.

The constable and his prisoners had not yet arrived, and their appearance was impatiently awaited by the crowd. When Tom and Chick entered the room Mr. Carr, who was looking for them, walked over, shook them by the hand, and conducted them to seats. That was the signal for the spectators to crane their necks for a good view of the boy who had captured the robbers. Tom and Chick were hardly more than seated when the constable came in with the two crooks, and their appearance took attention off the boys. The clerk opened the court as the magistrate entered from his private office and took his seat behind a raised flat-top desk. The charge against the rascals was read and they were asked whether they were guilty or not guilty.

They pleaded not guilty in sullen tones. The magistrate, who acted as public prosecutor, called Mr. Carr to the witness chair. He proceeded to tell how he had been aroused from his sleep by the pattering of gravel against one of the windows of his bedroom, and how on going to the window he saw a boy below, who, on being questioned as to his presence and actions, said that his name was Tom Trevor, and that he was a stranger in the village. He then narrated in substance the conversation which had taken place between him and the boy trader with reference to the presence of burglars in the house. He told how Tom had climbed up to the room; how they had gone down stairs on a tour of investigation, without results; how Tom had left him at the telephone in the library, and how when he subsequently went in search of the boy he had found him in the kitchen standing over the burglars with his revolver.

The magistrate asked him a few questions and then called on Tom Trevor. The chief interest centered in the boy's testimony, for everybody was anxious to hear how he had managed single-handed to catch the crooks. Tom told his story concisely and directly to the point. He showed no disposition to make himself out as a great hero. He simply confined himself to facts, and made those facts perfectly clear. The magistrate asked him one or two questions, and then Chick took his place. He had little to tell, as he had only taken a secondary part in the affair. The last witness was Constable Brown, and his testimony chiefly concerned what he saw when he reached the Carr home with his assistants. The magistrate then asked the prisoners if they had anything to say in their own behalf. They had nothing to say.

Indeed the strong evidence against them, and the presence in court of their kit of housebreaking tools, left them no loophole to crawl out at. The magistrate therefore remanded them for trial at Exeter, the county seat, and they were taken there that afternoon and locked up in the county jail. As Tom and Chick were not residents of the county, the magistrate said it would be necessary for them to furnish bonds for their appearance as witnesses at Exeter when the trial came on.

"Suppose we can't furnish bonds, what then?" asked Tom.

"I will have to give you in charge of the constable, who will then become responsible for your appearance," replied the magistrate.

"Can't you take our promise to appear? It won't pay me to have to lay over in this village

for a month or two. I couldn't afford it," remonstrated Tom.

"The law gives me no alternative. Perhaps Mr. Carr, who is under great obligations to you for the part you have played in this affair, will make himself responsible for your appearance in the Exeter court at the proper time."

"I will do that, your honor," said the cashier, jumping up. "I will sign their bonds, and offer my house and ground as security."

"Very well, Mr. Carr. I accept you. My clerk will prepare the bonds at once, and as soon as you have signed them these boys may depart," said the magistrate.

Half an hour later Mr. Carr and the two boys walked out of the court-room, and found a considerable crowd of the curious on the walk outside.

"You will both come to my house to dinner, where you are expected," said the cashier.

Chick objected to this part of the programme, and was finally allowed to return to the van, where he was taken to dinner at the blacksmith's house. Tom accompanied Mr. Carr to his home, and was duly presented to Mrs. Carr, Annie Carr and Alice Hutchings, and received a warm greeting from all three.

CHAPTER VII.—Tom As An Honored Guest.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Trevor," laughed Miss Hutchings when the two girls got Tom to themselves for a few minutes while waiting for dinner to be announced. "Neither Annie nor I had any idea we should see you so soon again."

"It's the unexpected that always happens," replied Tom, with a smile.

"It seems so. It appears that you have made quite a hero of yourself since we saw you out on the county road."

"You mean in reference to the burglar episode?"

"Certainly. You have placed Annie and her parents under great obligations by your timely appearance on the scene, and your plucky conduct afterward."

"I hope they won't lose any sleep over the matter," chuckled Tom. "I didn't do any more than a fellow ought to have done in my place."

"And just to think Annie and I slept through it all, and so did Mrs. Carr. We knew nothing about the house having been visited by thieves until Mr. Carr told us at the breakfast table this morning. When he said you were the one who saved his property, and captured the rascals as well, we were surprised. Were we not, Annie?"

"I should say so," answered Miss Carr, with a glance of admiration at Tom.

"Had we known that burglars were in the house I'm afraid we should have been dreadfully alarmed," said Miss Hutchings.

"I believe I should have fainted," said Miss Carr.

"It was fortunate, then, that you did not know," replied Tom.

"You must be awfully brave to face those men, and they were armed, too, Mr. Carr said," remarked Miss Hutchings.

"I was also armed, you know."

"But there were two men against you."

"I took them off their guard and got the drop on them. That put them in my power, and I let them see that I meant business, so they didn't dare take any chances. It is well for them that they made no attempt to draw their weapons. Had they done so I would have shot them."

"Would you really have done that, Mr. Trevor?" asked Miss Hutchings.

"I would have been obliged to in self-defense."

"Father says that you are a most remarkable boy," said Miss Carr.

"I'm afraid your father exaggerates my importance."

"I'm sure he does not," said the girl sweetly.

"I think myself that you are a most unusual boy," put in Miss Hutchings. "I'm positive my brother, who is about your age, wouldn't dare act as you did under the same circumstances."

"You can't tell what your brother is capable of doing until he is put to the test. He must be a nice fellow if he's like you."

"Thank you," replied the girl, with a blush and a bow. "I'm afraid you are a great flatterer."

"I didn't intend to flatter you. I merely expressed my sentiments on the subject."

"Well, you mustn't throw any bouquets at me, for you might make me vain."

"I think you're too sensible to let a little thing like that have any effect on you."

"Dear me, you are certainly very complimentary," replied Miss Hutchings, with a coquettish smile. "I think we had better change the subject."

"Very well," replied Tom coolly. "What shall we talk about?"

"Tell us about the proceedings at the court. Annie and I would like to hear what took place there."

"Certainly. It will give me great pleasure to give you a general idea of the examination of the rascals," said Tom, who proceeded to describe all that happened in the magistrate's office that morning.

As he finished his story dinner was announced, and he escorted both young ladies into the dining-room. A special spread had been prepared in honor of the young trader, and he enjoyed the meal immensely. He held up his end of the conversation in good shape, and the girls were more than ever attracted by his genial deportment. Mr. Carr asked him many questions about his business, and how he was getting on, all of which he answered with perfect frankness.

"I think I should enjoy traveling around the country like you do," said Miss Hutchings.

"All's not gold that glitters, Miss Hutchings," replied Tom. "I'm not touring for pleasure, but to make a living and something over, with an eye to the future."

"But surely you find some amusement in it as well, don't you?" she said.

"Well, I guess Chick and I don't miss any that we run across."

"Are you ever bothered by tramps on the road?"

"We have been once or twice, but when I pulled that gun of mine on them they skedaddled in short order. There's a heap of persuasion in a loaded six-shooter. It's an argument that nobody likes to contradict."

"Particularly when the man behind the gun means business," laughed Mr. Carr.

"I never pull my weapon unless I do mean business," replied Tom. "I know what my rights are, and I always insist on getting all that's coming to me."

"A boy of your caliber is pretty certain to come out at the top of the heap," said the cashier.

"A fellow has got to hold his own in this world or go to the wall. I haven't met many people in the course of my travels who are anxious to put themselves out for my benefit. I have traded with some pretty sharp people who had very little sentiment in their make-up. They counted on getting my scalp, but I guess they were disappointed in their expectations. I have rubbed against the world a good deal in my time, and that has a tendency to cut one's eye-teeth."

"We passed your van on our way home yesterday," said Miss Carr. "It does look very much like a circus wagon, rather the worse for wear. We noticed a small boy apparently asleep on the driver's seat. Was that your assistant?"

"Yes, that was Chick. He's cut his eye-teeth, too, in a pretty hard school. Anybody who tried to fool Slivers would have to get up long before daylight to make any sort of success of it, and the chances are then he'd come out second best. There are no flies on Chick, you can take my word for it. I find him of great use to me. He's as honest as the day is long, which can't be said of every boy brought up as he was."

"You call yourself Trading Tom—the boy who buys everything," smiled Miss Hutchings.

"That is my trade-mark."

"It is certainly an unique one; but of course you don't really buy everything."

"I come as near to it as can be reasonably expected."

"I presume you are able to resell at a profit whatever you purchase?"

"I certainly do, or there wouldn't be any use in me continuing the business. Nearly everything I buy has no great apparent value in the eyes of the seller, or the person wouldn't be disposed to part with them. Everybody has some truck around the house that is in the way and of no use to them. For instance, no one cares to retain a demoralized spring mattress. I am always ready to buy such things. I could not resell it, however, in that shape. I buy it with an eye to what I can get out of the springs. The framework cuts no figure whatever in the transaction."

"I see," said Miss Hutchings.

"Another example I will mention. A short time before I met you young ladies yesterday I bought, among other things, an ancient bureau of a woman who had had it stowed away in her garret many years. She wanted to get rid of it, and I paid her fifty cents for the privilege of relieving her of it. As it stood I could hardly have got more than fifty cents for it of a second-hand dealer. It was made of Spanish mahogany, and must have cost money when it was new and in style. The wood, however, was black and tarnished from age and neglect, and didn't look very inviting. You ought to see it now, though. Chick and I set to work and scraped it thoroughly, and this morning I applied a coat of polish to it. That brought out all the fine points of the wood same as if it were new. When it gets second coat it will look absolutely new. I removed the old glass

handles, which are obsolete, and I shall replace them with attractive bright brass ones. Then I shall offer that bureau for sale at \$10, and I won't have much trouble in getting it either."

"That will give you a good profit," said Miss Carr.

"Which I think I'm entitled to for rescuing an article from oblivion and making it of use and importance once more, just as I saved Chick from the slums of Chicago and hope to make a man of him in time."

"That was a very worthy action, Mr. Trevor," said Mrs. Carr, "and you no doubt will get your reward in some way."

"I am getting my reward right along, for Chick is my right bower, and thinks he can't do too much for me."

"That shows he appreciates what you did for him."

"Oh, Chick is all right—a sort of rough diamond that only requires to be ground a bit and polished to show what is really in him."

"I suppose you don't always expect to be a traveling trader?" said Miss Carr.

"No. I am ambitious to be something a great deal better than that. As soon as I see a chance to better myself I shall dispose of my outfit without the least regret. But while I remain a trader I shall continue to devote my best efforts to making the occupation a success, for I believe that whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing as well as possible. It is by putting one's best efforts in whatever one puts his hand to, no matter how humble, that he blazes the path to success."

"That's right, young man," said Mr. Carr approvingly. "If you follow that sentiment you are bound to become a successful man if you live."

Tom's words also made more than a passing impression on Miss Hutchings. She secretly applauded Tom's views, and the young trader rose greatly in her opinion. She felt that he was destined for a much higher plane of usefulness than that which he now occupied, and she entertained no doubt of his ultimate rise in the world. After dinner the party adjourned to the sitting-room again; but Tom did not stay much longer, as he said it was necessary for him to return to his van. When he rose to go Mr. Carr, with a few well-chosen words of thanks for his services, presented him with a gold watch and chain, to which Mrs. Carr added a handsome charm. A couple of hours later he and Chick, perched on the driver's seat, were on the road once more, with the houses of Woodland village fading out of sight behind.

CHAPTER VIII.—On the Road Again.

They traveled on till darkness overtook them, and then Tom hauled up at a spot where the road widened out around a tall, wide spreading walnut tree.

"This is our bivouac for tonight, Chip," he said. "Get down."

Slivers got down on one side and Tom on the other. They took out the horses and tied them to the tree where they could get plenty of grass. Then Tom got down the gas stove, made a pot of coffee and fried a mess of ham, eggs and potatoes, which, with fresh bread and butter, made a tip-top meal. After the things were washed up

they got the bureau out of the van, and while Chick held the reflector lamp Tom applied the second coat of polish. The left it standing between the wagon and the fence, where Tom calculated it would be perfectly safe, and turned in, after hanging a lighted lantern outside. This time they left the doors only partly open on a chain. They were not disturbed that night and were up about sunrise.

The bureau was dry and fit to be handled by that time. Breakfast over, the horses were hitched up and they started on again. In about an hour they came in sight of a big farmhouse setting back about half a mile from the road. Tom drove up the lane and entered the yard. A woman and three girls ranging from fifteen to twenty came to the back door, attracted by the unusual spectacle of the faded fancy van.

"Good-morning, ma'am," said Tom, with Chesterfieldian politeness. "I'm Trading Tom—the boy who buys everything. If you've got any old paper or odds and ends around the house that you would like to get rid of in exchange for new tinware, pins, needles, ribbons and such like notions too numerous to mention, or cash, I'll talk business with you."

"I don't know that I've got anything to sell," replied the woman.

"Maybe he'd buy that old clock up stairs that won't go," said one of the girls. "We need a new dish-pan, and I want a number of small things if he's got them."

"If you will get the clock I'll see what figure I can afford to put on it."

"I'm afraid you peddlers don't pay anything to speak of," said the woman.

"I'm not a regular peddler, ma'am. I make a specialty of buying old truck. I will treat you perfectly fair."

"I'll get the clock," said the oldest girl, who seemed to be eager to secure something from Tom.

Tom unlocked a flap behind him and exposed a wide shelf covered with boxes of different sizes.

"Would you like to see the latest thing in ribbons, ma'am?" he asked, taking out several boxes and stepping down to the ground.

The temptation was irresistible, and mother and girls gathered around him to examine the goods. They wanted ribbons of several colors and sizes and asked the prices. Tom quoted city prices, and as they knew he was not trying to cheat them they bought something like three dollars' worth. The oldest girl now appeared with the clock, and while he was inspecting it, the young lady selected some bright pink ribbon for a sash, and some narrow ribbon for a collar she intended to make. They also bought some needles, several papers of pins, tape, spools of thread and a few other things, and finally selected a dish-pan. Their purchases in all amounted to about six dollars. Tom said he would allow a quarter for the clock.

"It will have to be repaired, ma'am, before I can sell it," he said, and the woman let it go at that.

The father himself now made his appearance from the barn and looked curiously at the vehicle. He read the sign on the outside.

"Do you guarantee that liniment?" he asked Tom.

"It will do all that is claimed for it," replied the young trader. "It is one of the best prepara-

tions of its kind on the market. I have sold nearly six dozen bottles since I left Chicago. I have only two of the large size left."

"If I thought it was any good I'd buy a bottle," said the farmer, a bit doubtfully.

"Maybe you've got some old iron around you'd like to trade off," said Tom.

"No, but I've got a trunk full of old newspapers in the garret you're welcome to if you will take it for the liniment."

"I'll look at what you have," said Tom. "Get the scales, Chick."

Tom accompanied the farmer to the garret, where he looked the trunk over and weighed the paper.

"So you want to trade that for a big bottle of liniment?" he said.

"I'm willing to."

"I can do a little better by you than that. I always aim to do the fair thing and never try to take advantage of a person. I'll allow you seventy-five cents. That is a quarter toward the payment of what your wife and daughters just bought."

"That's pretty square," replied the farmer, evidently pleased. "I'll help you down with the trunk and contents."

When a settlement was made in the yard Tom received \$4.60 in money. He then bade the people good-by and started for the road, after presenting the eldest girl with a fancy ornament formed of brilliants for her hair, which she accepted with an exclamation of delight. About noontime they reached the village of Aesop, and Tom stopped his outfit in front of a small restaurant. Giving the horses a bag of oats each, the boys entered the eating-house and ate a modest dinner. The van during their absence attracted a whole lot of attention and curiosity, particularly the sign on the back, "TRADING TOM—the Boy who Buys Everything."

"Say, Jimmy," said one kid to another, "do you s'pose he'd buy a red-hot stove?"

"Why don't you ask him?"

"Where is he?"

"In that restaurant eatin' dis dinner."

"Is that him with the little runt at the second table?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Got a funny lookin' face, hasn't he? I mean the little feller."

"Yes. He looks older than me and you and we're bigger than him."

While Jimmy and his companion were talking about Tom and Chick, grown people were reading the sign on the side of the van and making humorous remarks about the outfit. At length Tom and Chick finished their dinner and came outside.

"Are you the chap who buys everything?" asked one of the wags of the village, with a grin, of Tom.

"I am," replied the young trader, looking him squarely in the eye. "If you're for sale I'm afraid I couldn't give much for you, but I'll set a figure if you say so."

The laugh was turned on the village humorist and he got very indignant.

"Do you mean to insult me?" he demanded angrily.

"Insult you! Why, you asked me a question and I answered you," replied Tom.

"You gave me an impertinent answer, and I'd be justified in kicking you into the street, you common fellow," snorted the other.

"You're at liberty to try it if you think you're man enough to do it," replied Tom, coolly.

"I wouldn't soil my hands touching you," answered the wag, loftily.

"Very considerate on your part," replied Tom, sarcastically.

The young man who prided himself on his wit turned away with a look of disdain and got out of the way as soon as he could escape the snickers of those who knew him and were enjoying his discomfiture. Chick had already mounted to his seat and Tom now followed him and drove off toward the cottage section, where he spent the whole afternoon making trades here and there along the route. As soon as it began to grow dark they returned to the restaurant and had their supper, and then Tom drove to a vacant spot of ground on the outskirts of the village close to a small manufacturing establishment, and roosted there for the night.

CHAPTER IX.—Tom Is Treated to a Surprise.

On the following morning, which was Saturday, the boys got their own breakfast with the help of the oil stove.

"Now, Chick, we'll overhaul and rearrange the stuff I bought in this week," said Tom to his assistant after they had cleaned up their breakfast things. "We'll reach Exeter this afternoon. It's a big town and I may find a chance to dispose of some of my stuff, so I've got to put things in shape."

Half the merchandise in the wagon was pulled out on the grass. All the old paper was tied up in handy-sized bundles. The magazines and story papers were sorted out and tied in piles. The old metal was put together in separate boxes. Then they got the mattress frames down from the roof of the van and detached the copper and brass springs from them, putting them in another box. The framework was taken apart, tied up in a bundle and returned to the top of the wagon. The parrot cage Tom had got for a dime was cleaned up till its brass parts shone like new, and the young trader figured that it ought to fetch \$1. The rusty stove was taken from under the van, cleaned and polished, and then returned to its place again. By the time the boys were ready for dinner everything was ship-shape and in order. Some of the factory hands on their way to their dinner stopped and viewed the van with a lot of curiosity. The bundles of magazines and story papers attracted the attention of several.

"Want to sell any of them things cheap?" asked a man, pointing at the bundles.

"Sure," replied Tom. "That bundle of magazines is complete from January to December. You can have it for half a dollar. Those in that bundle are different kinds of magazines in first-class condition, three for ten cents. Those in that bundle you can have at two for a nickel. The story papers go for a cent a copy."

The man bought the complete bundle and went off with it. Nearly everybody bought from a nickel to a quarter's worth of the magazines, reducing Tom's supply considerably. His profit was large because he had bought all of them for waste

paper. The manager of the mill, passing that way while the boys were eating their dinner, was attracted by the parrot cage. He decided that it was just what he wanted for his mocking bird.

"Want to sell that cage, young man?" he asked Tom.

"Yes, sir."

"What do you ask for it?"

Tom sized him up and thought he could stand \$1.50, so he named that price. The manager bought it without trying to dicker, and the young trader wrapped it in paper for him.

"You made a good profit on dat cage," grinned Chick.

"Yes, and on the magazines, too," replied Tom. "I didn't expect to sell anything in this village."

"Gee! I'd like to be boss of a business like dis," said Chick.

"Maybe I'll turn it over to you some day when I get hold of something that suits me better."

"Where'd I get the coin to pay for de outfit?" asked Chick.

"I'd trust you for it. I have perfect confidence in your honesty, Chick."

"I'd pay you all right, if you gave me time enough."

"I'd give you all the time you wanted."

"T'anks. Dere ain't many fellers like you, Tom. I'd hate to leave you even to be boss of my own biz. You've treated me white and you bet I'll never forget it," said Chick emphatically.

Tom said it was time for them to start, so the horses were hitched up and the van started for Exeter, which was only a few miles away. A mile outside of the town they stopped at a roadhouse to water the animals. The boys went to the bar and bought a bottle of soda water each. While they were drinking it the proprietor, who was standing on the veranda, noticed Tom's trademark on the vehicle. When the boys came out he said to Tom:

"I've got some stuff I want to sell. Will you look at it?"

"I will," replied the young trader, who was always ready for business.

The landlord led the way to the storage room at the top of the house.

"Here's a trunk with a lot of clothes that an old man left behind him when he died owing me quite a bill. What will you give for the lot?"

Tom opened the trunk, looked the things over, and named a small price.

"Is that the best you can do?" asked the man.

"Yes. I couldn't get much for them, while the trunk is so old-fashioned that I doubt if I could find a purchaser for it at any price."

The man produced a lot of other things for Tom's inspection, and he made a figure on the batch, which the proprietor, after some haggling, accepted. Tom paid him, and then with Chick's help carried the stuff to the van. On entering the town Tom made inquiries for a junk store, and finally found one down near the river which flowed by Exeter. Here he disposed of the bulk of his stuff at a fair profit. The man bought the trunk he got from the farmhouse, but he wouldn't take the old trunk Tom bought from the proprietor of the roadhouse.

"You'd better lose that somewhere in the woods," he laughed. "I wouldn't lumber my place up with it."

After dumping the clothes out, for which the

boy received little more than he had given for them he told Chick to return the trunk to the van. It would be handy to hold stuff in at any rate. The stove fetched a profit of about fifty cents, while the wood that had made up the frames of the spring mattresses went for a quarter. The dealer offered a dollar for the bureau, but Tom declined to sell it at that price. After leaving the dealer he stopped at a hardware store and bought suitable fancy brass handles for it. Next they went to the express office and Tom got his C. O. D. box of Popper's World-renowned Liniment. That finished their business for the day, and they went on to a restaurant and had a good dinner.

Tom then drove out to the railroad yards on the suburbs and located a small field beyond them, where he got permission to stay till Monday. As it was fenced in, the horses were allowed to roam about on the grass at will. The van was nearly empty now, so they had abundant room for their mattress. Chick had noticed that there was a show on at the Opera House that night, so he told Tom that he'd like to go to it.

"Do you think you can find your way back here, all right?" asked Tom, as he handed him half a dollar.

"Why not? All I'll have to do is to follow the river out to the railroad yard," replied Chick, confidently.

To say the truth it would be a hard thing for Chick to lose himself anywhere, so Tom had little doubt but he'd turn up in due time. After Slivers had started for the Opera House, Tom got out his account book and figured up the profits of his trip to date. He found he had a very comfortable balance in his favor. When he finished his accounts he shut up the van and crossing the street and the railroad tracks began to saunter along the bank of the river. It was a very warm night and the breeze near the water was a grateful relief after the close interior of the wagon. He proceeded slowly, with no particular object in view, for half a mile, by which time he was way beyond the outskirts of the town, when he saw a scow drawn up beside the bank.

The craft appeared to be deserted, so Tom stepped on board and sat down on the roof of the covered part aft, which answered for a cabin or living quarters for the men who had charge of the scow when in commission. After sitting there a while he walked forward and leaned over the side of the craft near the bows, watching the slow progress of a freight train on the other side of the river, and the lights of Rivermouth, the big manufacturing town which was connected with Exeter by ferry. While he stood there in the shadows three men slouched aboard the scow and made their way into the cabin, where they struck a light and ignited a candle which they stood on a rude table in the center of the place. One of the men opened a bundle he had brought aboard under his arm. It contained half a dozen sandwiches and a pie cut into three sections. He also produced from his hip pocket a large flat black bottle, which he placed near the candle.

Each man helped himself to two sandwiches and a slice of the pie and began to eat like hungry men. Tom had not heard the men come on the scow, and was not aware of their presence until he turned to return to the van, when he saw the flickering light and the forms of the men in the cabin. He immediately concluded that the persons

belonged to the scow, and as he passed the doorway casually glanced inside. He stopped short, however, with a gasp of surprise, as he recognized two of the men as Barney Hogan and Jim Snuggs the Woodland burglars, whom he supposed to be safely lodged in the Exeter county jail.

CHAPTER X.—Tom Gets in a Bad Fix.

The men did not notice Tom as he looked in at them. They stood around the table eating voraciously and conversing between bites.

"It ain't safe for us to stay here," said Barney, reaching for the flask, which he raised to his lips after unscrewing the stopper. "The moment our escape is discovered the cops will start out to round us up."

"We might be able to steal a ride on that freight train they are makin' up in the yard back there," said the chap Tom did not know.

"It won't do to go back to the yard just on a chance of gettin' into an empty box car and a seat on the bumpers," replied Snuggs. "Some yard man would be sure to see us hangin' around and suspect what we were up to. We must hoof it down the road as soon as we're rested. Maybe we'll find a rowboat somewhere along the river and then we can cross over to the other side."

"I ain't countin' on such luck as that," said Barney. "I figure that we'll have to walk all night, and hide somewhere soon after daylight."

"We'd better stick to the river on the chance of finding a boat, for it would be much to our advantage to get on the other side as soon as we could," remarked Snuggs. "You see, the police will go to the ferry the first thing to find out if any one seen three chaps of our description go on the boat. The chances are we would have been noticed had we gone across that way, and then the officers on the other side would be notified to look out for us. When the cops find that we weren't seen on the boat they'll figure that we're still on this side, and will hunt for us up and down the river and out along the road. If we could get across on the sly we'd give them the slip."

Snuggs's remarks received favorable consideration, and it was decided to stick to the river. By this time the men had finished the food and partly emptied the flask. Tom concluded he had heard enough of their plans to be able to put the police on their trail, so he started to leave the scow. Unfortunately Barney looked toward the door at that moment and saw his retreating figure.

"There's some one outside watchin' us," he said, in a tone that startled his companions. "He must have heard all we said. We must catch him," and he made a spring for the door.

Snuggs and the other man, whose name was Haskins, followed him. Tom, unconscious that his presence had been discovered, had reached the bank and was hastening away. The three escaped prisoners rushed after him and were almost on him before he heard their footsteps. He started to run the moment he saw they were after him, and would probably have made good his escape in the darkness but that he tripped over a rail and fell headlong across the ties. His head struck the opposite rail and the shock knocked him temporarily unconscious. The crooks grabbed him, but saw right away that he was insensible.

"He's a boy," said Barney. "Must have got a hard tap to knock him out. What shall we do with him? He's on to us, of course, and as soon as he comes to he'll send word to the police and they'll know the direction we've taken."

"Take him aboard the scow and tie him up in the cabin," suggested Haskins.

"We ain't got nothin' to tie him with," said Barney.

"I saw a piece of rope aboard," replied Haskins.

"Let's see whether he's playin' possum or not," said Snuggs, striking a match and holding it close to Tom's face.

The moment he got a view of the boy's features he dropped the match and uttered an imprecation.

"What's the matter?" asked Barney, who had not identified Tom.

"Do you know who this chap is?" replied Snuggs, in a fierce tone.

"No. How should I?" returned Barney, carelessly.

"It's the kid who turned the trick on us in Woodland."

"What!" ejaculated Barney, showing sudden interest. "That peddler boy?"

"The identical rooster."

"Well, I'll be jiggered. How comes he to be here?"

"That's more'n I can tell. We can't take no chances with him, I can tell you. He's too dangerous. Come now, help me carry him aboard the scow."

During the transit to the flat-bottomed craft Tom regained his senses. Realizing that he was in the hands of the crooks, and not in a position to make a break for liberty, he decided that it would be the part of prudence to keep quiet and pretend to be still unconscious. The rascals carried him into the cabin and laid him on the floor.

"Get the rope," said Snuggs to Haskins.

The latter fetched it and no time was lost in tying Tom so as to render him helpless."

"I think the best thing we can do, Barney, is to toss him into the river," said Snuggs. "Then we'll get both revenge and safety so far as he's concerned."

"That won't do," objected Haskins. "I won't have no hand in a murder. Leave him here. He's not likely to be found before we're safe off."

"You say that 'cause you haven't any score ag'n him; but Barney and me have. He queered a job of ours and got us jugged. We swore to get square with him some day if we met him ag'n, and now we've got the chance to keep our word."

"I don't care what you've got against him, I won't stand for havin' him done up while I'm around," replied Haskins, decidedly.

"You be blessed!" growled Snuggs. "You ain't got no right to stand between him and us. We're in the same boat and must pull together."

"That's all right; but there's no call to murder the boy."

"Well, you needn't know nothin' about the matter. Barney and me'll attend to him."

"No," said Barney, "I ain't in favor of puttin' him out of the way. I won't put my head in no noose just to get square with him."

Barney's unexpected opposition angered Snuggs, and he abused his associate in round terms.

"I thought you had some backbone," he snarled. "Havin' your chance to get back at that kid who's

the cause of our bein' in the fix we are." What kind of a lobster are you, anyway?"

"I ain't such a blamed fool as you seem to be," retorted Barney.

"We're only wastin' time scrappin' over the chap," put in Haskins. "We ought to be on our way. Leave the boy here. He can't get away himself, and it isn't likely anybody'll come before Monday. He'll be pretty well starved by that time. That ought to be satisfaction enough for you."

The last part of Haskins's remarks had some effect on Snuggs. He judged that there was little chance of the scow being visited that night or all day Sunday and Sunday night, with the possibility that no one might even come there on Monday.

It struck him at once that Tom had a good chance of starving to death before any help came to him. At any rate, the boy, if left there bound hand and foot as he was, would be in a pretty bad pickle, so he suddenly changed front and agreed to fall in with the ideas of his companions.

Harmony was thus restored, Tom was placed in a corner of the cabin, and the men then left the scow and started down the bank of the river, keeping a bright lookout for a boat.

"I guess I've had a narrow escape," thought the young trader when he was the sole occupant of the cabin. "That Snuggs is a mean-minded ruffian. If he had had his way, I'd have been thrown into the river to drown. I'm in a bad enough fix as it is. They tied me good and hard, and I don't see much chance of getting free by my own efforts. Looks as if I was slated to stay here all night, and by morning those rascals will be well on their way to safety. Chish, when he gets back from the show, will wonder where I went to, for he will see the van locked up. He'll sit around expecting me to turn up any minute, and when I don't, he won't know what to make of things. Well, I suppose I might as well take matters coolly, and trust to luck."

Tom tried his best to free himself, but without avail. The men had made a good job of it, and he was tied to stay so till somebody released him. Hour after hour passed away and he dozed off to sleep.

Suddenly he was aroused by the flashing of a light in his eyes.

"Hello," exclaimed a man's voice, "what's this?"

Tom looked up and saw a policeman with a dark lantern in his hand.

"Cut me loose, will you please?" he said eagerly.

"How came you to be in this plight, young man?" asked the officer.

"Three crooks who escaped from the Exeter county jail did me up as you see."

"Oh, ho, so it was them, eh? How long ago is it since you met them?" asked the policeman, kneeling down, drawing out his knife and beginning to cut the rope.

"Well, they nabbed me between nine and ten o'clock," answered Tom. "I've no idea what time it is now. Maybe you know."

"It's a little after midnight," replied the officer, as he severed the last strand that held the boy's legs.

"Thanks, officer," said Tom, getting on his feet. "Are you after the rascals?"

"I am. Two of us are searching this neighborhood for a clue. No one could guess the route taken by the scoundrels. Men have been sent out in all directions to try and find them."

"I can give you a pretty good line on them if they haven't changed their plans after leaving me here."

"Well, where did they go—down the river?"

"Yes; looking for a boat to get across to the other side of the river."

"You say they made a prisoner of you around ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Then they have a good two hours' start of us. How came they to bother you?"

Tom explained how he had discovered the trio in the cabin eating and planning their course of action.

"I had no idea that they saw me outside in the dark," he said. "I knew them and had just started for the freight yards to get somebody there to telephone to the jail when I saw them coming after me. They never would have caught me if I hadn't tripped over the railroad tracks."

"How is it that you recognized them as having escaped from the jail? By their conversation?"

"No. I was the cause of the capture of two of them—Barney Hogan and Jim Snuggs—after they had entered the residence of George Carr, cashier of the local bank of Woodland, to rob it. I knew them at once, and the fact that they were at large was enough to convince me that they had managed in some way to get out of jail where I knew they were awaiting their trial. I am the chief witness against them, and because of the part I played in their capture, Snuggs wanted to throw me into the river tonight. Fortunately for me, the other two objected to being mixed up in a murder, and so they left me here in the hope that I wouldn't be discovered before Monday at the earliest."

"It is fortunate for you that we came this way, and a piece of good luck for us that we found you and thus got a clue to the direction taken by the rascals."

At that moment a policeman in plain clothes, a detective officer, stuck his head in at the door and asked the man Tom was talking to what was keeping him.

"Have you got one of them?" he added, seeing Tom's figure in the gloom.

"No, Dan, but I've got evidence that they came this way," replied the policeman. "Come, let us get out of this, young man."

On reaching the second officer's side, Tom was asked to repeat his story for the other's benefit, which he did.

"So they're trying to make their escape down the river," said the detective. "We have no time to lose, Hinkley, for they have nearly three hours' start of us. Here comes a freight train now. We'll stop it, get aboard and go on as far as Allentown. We can telephone to headquarters from there, and then start up the river on the chance of meeting the men. I don't think there is much chance of their finding a rowboat to get across the river."

Tom was instructed to report at police headquarters in the forenoon, and he promised to do

so. The officer then signalled the freight engineer. As soon as the train came to a stop the policemen got into the cab, briefly explained things to the engineer, and then the train started on again.

Tom took the road back to the yards, congratulating himself over his lucky escape from a bad fix, and in about fifteen minutes reached the van, where he found Chick impatiently waiting for him to show up.

CHAPTER XI.—Tom Calls On Miss Hutchings.

"Gee, Tom!" exclaimed Chick, "where have you been? It's after one."

"Up the river and in trouble," answered Tom.

"What trouble did you get into?"

"I ran against those two crooks that tried to rob Mr. Carr's house in Woodland."

"How could you when they're in jail?"

"They escaped this evening with another chap and went aboard a scow hauled up to the river bank about half a mile from here."

"You don't say!" cried Chick, much astonished.

"I was on the scow at the time taking in the breezes," said Tom, who then went on and told his companion all that had happened to him until he was finally rescued from his predicament by a policeman, one of a pair who were out hunting for the rascals.

"It's a good thing dat de cop found you. I never would have known where you was. You might have stayed dere a couple of days wit'out anytin' to eat."

"That's right," said Tom, unlocking the doors of the van.

A quarter of an hour later both were asleep. They slept late Sunday morning and got their breakfast in the van. Leaving Chick in charge of the vehicle, Tom went to police headquarters and reported the events of the night so far as his connection with the escaped prisoners was concerned. He learned that so far as the authorities were aware, the rascals had not yet been retaken.

On leaving the station house he went to a restaurant and had dinner, after which he went back to the van.

"Here's half a dollar, Chick," he said. "Go into town and get your dinner. I have had mine."

Chick took the money and departed, but without any intention of spending all the money on a meal. While his companion was away, Tom passed the time reading the Sunday edition of one of the Riverside papers.

His assistant got back about two o'clock and Tom told him he was going to pay a short call on Miss Hutchings, who he presumed had returned home as she said she was going to. He inquired his way to Jefferson street, in the residential section of the town, and found it was lined with cottages of the better class, all standing apart in their own grounds.

Following the numbers he came to the Hutchings house, where he rang the bell.

A neat-looking servant answered his ring.

"Is Miss Hutchings at home?" Tom inquired.

"She is," was the answer.

"Tell her Thomas Trevor would like to see her."

"Walk in, please."

Tom entered and was shown into the parlor.

In a few minutes Miss Hutchings appeared, looking more bewitching than ever.

"How do you do, Mr. Trevor," she said, with a beaming smile. "I am delighted to see you."

"The pleasure is mutual, Miss Hutchings," responded Tom, taking her hand.

"It is very kind of you to call."

"I couldn't help it, for you are an attraction I was unable to resist."

"Dear me, are you going to shower compliments on me again? I thought you had exhausted your supply the afternoon we met at Mr. Carr's," she laughed.

"I have a few left," he said with a smile.

"You boys are such jolliers that one hardly knows how to take you."

"I may do a little jollying in my business, but I wouldn't think of jollying you. It is my intention to speak only the truth in your presence. Now, when I say that, in my opinion, you look even more charming this afternoon, in that new gown which well becomes you, than you did at Woodland, I am only expressing my real sentiments on the subject."

Miss Hutchings blushed and looked pleased. Say what they will to the contrary, every girl likes to be complimented on her personal appearance, especially by one she is interested in, and Alice Hutchings was more interested in the young trader than she would admit.

"When did you reach Exeter?" she asked.

"Yesterday afternoon."

"How do you like our town?"

"Very much, indeed, as far as I've seen of it. It is quite a flourishing looking place."

"Riverside, across the river, is larger, but it isn't as nice a town by any means. It is chiefly noted for its manufacturing interests. Nearly all the big business people of Riverside live here in Exeter, and go back and forth every day on the ferry. My father is the president of the ferry, and also of the Exeter National Bank."

Judging from the cottage and its appointments, as well as Mr. Hutchings's importance in the community, Tom figured that his fair hostess was a member of the best society in Exeter, and he felt that she had greatly honored him in receiving him at her home on terms of equality. He had taken a great fancy to the young lady, but he was afraid that if her father learned that he was only a traveling trader he would not approve of the intimacy. After talking about various things, Tom suddenly said:

"Did you hear about the escape from the Exeter jail, of those two rascals who tried to rob Mr. Carr's house?"

"Why, yes; it was in the morning's paper. Isn't it too bad they got away?"

"Yes, it is. You will be surprised when I tell you that I ran across them last night along the river below the railroad yards."

"Is it possible!" she exclaimed, with a look of astonishment.

"I will tell you how it happened," he replied.

Whereupon he described to her how he had met the rascals and fallen into their hands; what they had done to him, and how he had subsequently been rescued by one of the Exeter police

force. She looked startled when Tom described how Snuggs wanted to throw him into the river in order to get him out of the way and be revenged upon him at the same time.

"You had a narrow escape," she said, with some earnestness.

"That's right. If the other two, or even Barney Hogan, had been in favor of doing me up that way, there was nothing to prevent them from carrying out their purpose, for the scow is moored at a spot that is very lonesome at night."

"I'm so glad nothing serious happened to you, Mr. Trevor."

"Thank you, Miss Hutchings. It is very kind of you to express your sympathy. Being as I am a rolling stone, without parents or relatives, and nobody but Chick to mourn my loss if I were suddenly removed from this busy world, it is a satisfaction to know that you feel at least a slight interest in my welfare," replied Tom, in a grateful tone.

"I feel more than a slight interest in you, Mr. Trevor," replied the girl, impulsively. "You may be only a traveling trader at present, but I am sure you will not long remain so. I know that you are energetic and ambitious, and to a boy so well endowed as you are, all things are possible."

"I think the compliments are coming from you now, Miss Hutchings," laughed Tom.

"I am only following your example—expressing my real sentiments on the subject," she replied, with a slight blush.

"I accept them as such and thank you for your encouraging words," replied Tom.

After that the fair girl and the enterprising young trader seemed drawn a little closer together in spirit. Each recognized that a kind of mutual interest existed between them, and in consequence, their bearing to each other unconsciously became more unreserved and friendly.

Tom remained till about five o'clock and then said he guessed it was time for him to go.

"Shall I see you again before you leave town?" Alice asked, with a look that indicated it would give her much pleasure to have him call again.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Hutchings. I shall cross over to Riverside by an early boat in the morning, and continue my way west and south. I trust we shall meet again in the near future, for I will try and return to this town some time, if I have to make a special trip by rail. Your friendship is more to me than perhaps you understand. You have a nice home, parents, a large circle of friends who admire you, while I—well, I am only a bit of floatsam on the world, with my future to make through my own efforts. Your friendship, therefore, is a precious possession to me, and I want to deserve it, and I don't want to lose it. I shall remember your kind words of encouragement, and I shall think of you often as distance lengthens between us. If you would permit me to——"

"Permit you to what, Mr. Trevor?" said the girl, who was deeply moved by the boy's words, as he paused abruptly.

"I was going to ask a favor of you, but I fear I have no right to suggest it," he said, with some slight emotion in his tone.

"I am sure you would not ask any favor I could not willingly grant, so please express it."

"I will do so, and if it be presumption on my part, I beg your forgiveness in advance. I was going to say that if you would permit me to write you once in a while, it would make me very happy."

"You have my permission to do so, Mr. Trevor," she replied, with a smile. "And I promise to answer your letters if you will let me know where an answer is likely to reach you."

"Thank you, Miss Hutchings. I appreciate the favor very much. Any letter you send me will be treasured in remembrance of this afternoon, which I regard as the brightest spot in my life so far. I shall labor harder than ever to be worthy of your friendship, and to show you that I mean to get ahead in the world as fast as it is possible for a boy of my years to do."

"I have no fear about your future," replied the girl, in a tone of earnest conviction. "I am satisfied that the time will come when I shall consider myself fortunate in knowing you. I foresee that you will make your mark in some way, for, in my opinion, you are one boy in a thousand."

"I thank you again for your generous appreciation of me, and now wish you good-by, trusting that we shall meet again before a great while."

Tom put out his hand and she placed hers in his.

"Good-by, Mr. Trevor," she said. "Be sure that I will not forget you."

He bowed courteously to her, and the next moment he was outside.

He turned at the gate and saw her still standing at the door. He waved his hand and she returned the salute with a smile.

Then Tom walked up the street, and Alice went to her room conscious that something new and sweet had come into her life which made her feel very happy.

CHAPTER XII.—An Encounter With Tramps.

Tom and Chick were astir soon after daylight. The horses were hitched up and they drove toward the ferry-house. Within a block of the river they stopped at a small restaurant for breakfast, then they were aboard the boat which was about ready to start.

A few minutes sufficed to land them at the wharf on the other side of the river, and from that point they proceeded through the business second of Riverside.

Tom stopped at a wholesale tinware establishment to renew his depleted stock of articles most in demand among the farmers' wives, and then went to a jobbing dry goods house where he bought a supply of the notions he needed. There being nothing else to detain him in town, he started on and soon was on the county road with his horses' heads pointed to the southeast.

He did some business along his route that day, and at nightfall camped near a cross roads.

"Dis here is what I call de life for me," said Chick, as they squatted on the grass after supper, and Slivers brought forth a cigarette from a pack in his pocket. "Most fellers dat's used to de city like me, wouldn't come out into de country for a gold mine. I was radder homesick at first, as you know; but now it's different. I'm

satisfied if I'm in town once in a while where I kin go to a show."

"You're looking a whole lot healthier since you have been out with me, Chick," replied Tom, "though you're a tough nut, any way, and it would take a great deal to knock you out even if you had stayed in Chicago."

"Bet your life it would," grinned the boy. "But I feel like a fightin'-cock since I've been travenin' in dat waggin. I'll bet I could lick any two boys my size now and come up to de scratch smilin'."

Chick blew out several rings of blue smoke and watched them circle above his head. It was dark by this time, but the sky was bright with stars, and they could easily see up and down the road for some little distance. There was scarcely any breeze, so that the tiniest branches on the trees stood motionless in the air. But for the noises of the frogs and divers nocturnal insects there would have been absolute silence over the face of nature. As Chick tossed the butt of his cigarette away and got up to stretch himself, he saw two men coming slowly toward them along the road. The boy called Tom's attention to them and then hopped up on the rear of the van where he sat down, allowing his legs to swing under him.

When the newcomers got close it was seen that they belonged to the hobo fraternity, and pretty tough specimens they were. Each of them had an empty tomatoe can slung over his shoulder, and carried a cudgel in his hand. They saw the wagon and walked toward it.

"Hello, matey," said one, stopping in front of Tom, "got somethin' good to eat in yer outfit?"

"Hungry, are you?" answered Tom.

"I reckon we are. If ye've got any lickin' we'll take that fust."

"Don't carry anything of that kind."

"Why don't yer?" asked the fellow, in an impatient tone.

"Because I don't," replied Tom, coolly.

"Don't get sassy, young feller, or I'll butt yer in the snoot."

"Maybe you will, but I doubt it. If you expect me to give you anything to eat, you've got to be civil."

"Hear the little cock crow!" said the tramp, sarcastically. "Jest yer hand out a supply of yer eatables or we'll step aboard and help ourselves."

"If that's the way you talk, you won't get anything from me."

"Yer do what I tell yer, or I'll knock yer block off," said the tramp, raising his cudgel in a threatening way.

Chick saw that there was going to be trouble, so he darted back into the van for the six-shooter.

The second tramp, seeing him retreat, decided to follow. Tom sprang forward and seized the cudgel held by the first tramp and wrenched it from his grasp.

"Now you get out quick," he said in a resolute tone.

The tramp, with a snarl of rage, stuck his hand into his shirt and drew out a wicked-looking knife, the blade of which glinted in the starlight.

"I'll carve yer up," he roared, preparing to make a lunge with the weapon at Tom.

The boy was too quick for him. He brought the knotty end of the cudgel down on his wrist, and the knife fell to the grass. The tramp uttered a howl of mingled anger and pain. A different kind of a howl came from the other tramp. He was in the act of clambering into the van when Chick jabbed the revolver in his face and said tersely, "Git!"

He "got" quick, tumbling backward on to the grass. Tom stepped forward and put his foot on the knife so that the tramp could not recover it. Then he swung the cudgel so close to the fellow's face that he hopped back and tripped over his companion. The ragged and disreputable pair got badly tangled up in their efforts to rise, and they filled the air with their imprecations.

Tom picked up the knife and tossed it to Chick. Then he waited for the men to get to their feet. As soon as they did, he ordered them to get away at once. They stood and gazed at him, apparently disinclined to obey.

At that moment Chick accidentally pressed the trigger of the revolver. There was a sharp report and the bullet whizzed between the heads of the two tramps. That was more than they bargained for. They were impressed with the idea that Chick had intended to shoot them. They were panic-stricken and took to their heels at once.

Chick uttered a shout of glee, sprang to the ground, and sent another bullet after them, taking care that it would pass over their heads.

"Great Scott, Chick!" cried Tom. "You've hit one of them."

One of the tramps had tumbled over into the road. He scrambled to his feet again in a hurry and followed after his companion as hard as he could.

Tom was relieved to find that the fall had come from the rascal's fright and not from the leaden messenger. Chick whooped things up with howls of satisfaction, and sent a third shot after the retreating hobos.

"I'll bet dat dey won't forget dis performance for a month," he said.

Nothing would have pleased him better than to have rushed after the rascals and discharged the remaining chambers of the weapon, but he guessed that Tom would not approve of such a proceeding, and he never did anything that Tom didn't like if he could help it.

"We have taught them a lesson, I hope," said the young trader. "Perhaps they won't be in such a hurry after this to bulldoze persons they happen to come across."

"Gee! How dey did run, especially de big fellow dat got de tumble in de dust," chuckled Chick. "It was better dan a circus to watch 'em."

"You gave them a terrible shock when you fired that gun the first time. The bullet must have sung between their ears. That certainly started them on the go."

"I didn't mean to shoot dat time. De revolver went off before I knew what was goin' to happen. Dey was lucky to get off wit'out a bullet," said Chick.

"I thought you shot on purpose to frighten them," replied Tom, a bit surprised.

"Nope. It was an accident, but it did de busi-

ness all right. Dey started, bet your boots. Den I fired to make 'em go faster. What a nerve dat feller had to order you to fetch him somethin' to eat, just as if he was some big rooster wit' lots of money, and you was his nigger waiter. If dey'd behaved demselves dey'd have got some grub, now dey'll have to go hungry, which serves dem right."

"Well, it's time to turn in, Chick," said Tom. "Hand me the lantern and I'll stick it up at the corner of the van."

A few minutes later, with the door partly closed and secured by the chain, they lay down to rest and were soon asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.—An Unexpected Encounter.

A week later they entered a good-sized city on their route and put up over Sunday on a vacant lot where other vehicles were stored.

The horses were lodged in a cheap stable attached to the lot. Tom and Chick went to a cheap hotel and registered. After supper, Tom went to the reading-room and wrote a fairly long letter to Alice Hutchings, detailing his adventures during the week, and directing her to address him at a certain town he expected to reach a week later.

After mailing the letter he and Chick went to a show, after which they returned to the hotel and went to the room they were to occupy together.

On Monday morning Tom sold the greater part of his purchases at a junk store. Then he visited several second-hand stores to try and sell the bureau. The best offer he could get was \$2.75, and as he considered it worth a good deal more than that, he kept it in the wagon.

Two days afterward he entered a small village in the next state about dark. His outfit attracted a lot of attention when it halted before the small hotel. A crowd gathered around it, thinking it was the advertising van of a small circus. Tom let the mob gape, and entering the main room of the hotel, inquired what it would cost for two suppers. He was told fifty cents. This was satisfactory, so the young trader and his assistant adjourned to the dining-room, where they got steak, potatoes, hot rolls, prunes and coffee.

"Dem prunes look kind of sickly, don't you t'ink?" remarked Chick.

"You mean they are small?" said Tom.

"Dey're small an t'in, like a kid what ain't had enough to eat. Kin I get anudder plate? Dere wasn't more'n two mout'fuls of dem."

"I guess a second helping of prunes will be extra, but if you like them, get some more and I'll put up for them."

So Chick called the waitress and ordered a second plate of prunes.

"We only give one plate with supper," she said.

"Is dat a fact? Well, spose you mosey into de kitchen and find annuder plate of dem and charge extry for it."

The waitress brought him a double portion this time, much to his satisfaction, and told him to ante up a dime.

Tom paid the money and waited patiently for Chick to get away with the prunes.

"Gosh! But dem prunes goes to de right

spot," said Chick. "It's a pity, dough, dat dey ain't got more body to dem. I'm t'inkin' dem prunes was raised on a poor farm."

When the bys reached the veranda facing on the street again, they found the van still an object of curiosity to the villagers. They mounted on the front seat and drove off. Tom hauled up at a general store and went in to purchase sundry provisions, such as butter, eggs, etc., for his larder. The butter he put into a covered stone crock which he placed in a pail of cold water to keep as cool as possible. They passed the night on the outskirts of the village, and started on again immediately after breakfast.

On the following Saturday they reached the town of Essex, where Tom had told Miss Hutchings a letter would reach him. He halted the van in front of the post-office, and, going to the general delivery window, asked the man if there was a letter for Thomas Trevor. The clerk pulled a small bunch of letters out of the "T" pigeon-hole and began sorting them over. Tom watched him with a beating heart and eager look. He felt he would be greatly disappointed if there was no letter for him.

His heart gave a great jump as the clerk tossed a letter to him and put the others back into their receptacle. He picked it up and saw that it was addressed in a feminine hand, and of course it came from Miss Hutchings.

He placed it in his pocket, as carefully as if it contained a \$1,000 bill, and returned to his perch on the wagon. Then they took their supper at a restaurant and then kept on out of town.

It was dark by the time they found a suitable place along the county road to haul up for the night. The horses were released and tethered by their long ropes, the lantern lit and hung up outside the van, while the reflector lamp was turned on inside by Tom so he could read his precious letter.

Slicing open the envelope carefully with his penknife, Tom pulled out the enclosure which bore a slight perfume suggestive of a lady's boudoir.

It began: "Dear Mr. Trevor. I received your delightful and very welcome letter, dated July 18th, and mailed from Dayton, and I read and re-read it with feelings of great pleasure. I will now keep my promise to you and answer it, though I cannot promise that my poor efforts will be as interesting to you as your splendid letter was to me. Your adventure with the two tramps gave me quite a thrill, and I shudder to think how you might have been stabbed by that ruffian who attacked you," etc.

The letter was full of a kindly personal interest to Tom, and its perusal made him very happy indeed. He read it through three times before finally returning it to his pocket, and while he was thus occupied Chick sat on the end of the van. Tom turned out the lamp and told Chick that he was going to walk up the road a bit to stretch his legs.

"You can come if you want to," he said.

"Nope," replied Chick, "dis is good enough for me."

So Tom started up the lonesome road alone. The road swung around a short distance ahead and the light of the van lantern vanished be-

hind him. Tom was rather pleased to be alone, as he wanted to commune with himself over the contents of Alice Hutchings's letter. Its tone and words were very satisfactory to him; so much so, indeed, that he began building castles in the air in which the girl was a very important element.

Lost in delightful visions of the future, Tom was hardly aware that he was approaching a railroad crossing. Between him and the tracks stood an old and dilapidated story-and-a-half shanty, fronting on the road. As Tom approached it, a light suddenly flashed from one of the side windows, and the gleam attracted the boy's attention, and he woke up from his airy dreams.

The heat of the night had made Tom thirsty and he thought he would stop at the house, ask for a dipper of water and then retrace his steps to the van, which was something less than half a mile in his rear now. A weather-worn picket fence, much dilapidated, separated the house from the road and also enclosed it with a weed-grown yard on the sides and rear. The place did not present a very encouraging aspect as Tom stepped in front of the gate which was open, and hung on one hinge.

"If it wasn't for that light in the window, I'd believe the place was tenantless," said the young trader to himself, regarding the building with a doubtful eye.

He walked up to the door and raised his hand to knock when it was suddenly opened in his face and two men filled the opening.

They started back in a kind of consternation, as if his presence had startled them, and for a moment seemed undecided whether to retreat or not.

As the night was not a dark one, there was light enough for Tom to see the faces of the men quite distinctly, and from them to get a fair view of his features. There was mutual recognition in the looks that passed between them. Tom saw before him Jim Snuggs and Barney Hogan, the escaped crooks, and they appeared to be much the worse after their tramp from Exeter.

They, on their part, identified the boy outside as Trading Tom, the lad who had captured them in Woodland, and thereby became the cause of their subsequent hard luck when they might otherwise have been living in clover on the fruits of their projected burglary of Mr. Carr's home.

CHAPTER XIV.—On The Watch.

"So it's you," said Snuggs in an ugly tone, glaring at the young trader.

Tom made no answer to this unfriendly salutation.

"I thought we'd fixed you up so you wouldn't bother us again in a hurry, but it seems you are always bobbin' up when we don't want you around," continued the crook.

"You needn't worry about me," replied Tom, coolly. "This meeting is as much a surprise to me as it is to you chaps."

"Oh, is it?" sneered Snuggs. "Why were you spying around this door if you didn't know we was here?" he added suspiciously.

"I wasn't spying. I saw a light in the window of this house and I stopped to get a dipper of water."

"Don't lie now. You've drinkin' water in your van, haven't you?"

"Yes, but the van is some little distance from here."

"What are you doin' away from it at this hour?"

"I was taking a walk."

"Tell that to the marines. We don't believe you. You got on to us somehow and tracked us here to find out what we were up to."

"That isn't so."

"I say it is so. This house ain't occupied except by us for the present, and you wouldn't stop here for a drink of water. You came here to spy on us, I tell you. There ain't no use of you denyin' it, for Barney and me are dead on to you."

"I have told you the truth, but if you won't believe me, it won't worry me any. I'll go back to the van and get a drink there," replied Tom, turning away from them.

"Hold on. We don't part company so easily as all that," said Snuggs, reaching out and grabbing him by the arm. "This business has got to be settled between us."

"Let me go," cried Tom, tugging to free himself.

"Lay hold of him, Barney, and drag him into the house," said Snuggs.

The other crook obeyed, and Tom presently found himself a prisoner inside the tenantless shanty.

"Now, you young spy, we're goin' to fix you for keeps this time," gritted Snuggs. "You've got into the habit of followin' us up, no matter where we go, and it's goin' to be stopped, d'ye understand?"

"I haven't followed you up," replied Tom. "That's only your imagination."

"Imagination be hanged. We hadn't more'n got away from the jail in Exeter than we caught you watchin' us on the scow. If we hadn't nabbed you, you'd gone to the police and put them on our track. Well, here it ain't much more'n two weeks afterward that we've caught you spyin' on us at this shanty. If we hadn't detected you, there ain't no doubt you'd have told the first cop you met that we were in this neighborhood. As long as you are travelin' in this part of the country we ain't safe. The next time you got on to us we mightn't be so lucky as to know it, and the first thing we knew we'd be jugged again. You're too smart for a trader, you ought to be a detective," said Snuggs, sarcastically.

"I don't see any use of arguing with you, since you won't believe what I tell you," replied Tom.

"No, there ain't no use. We've cut our eye teeth, and we ain't such fools as to swallow the soft soap that comes out of your mouth. We've taken all the chances with you we intend to. Now we've got you dead to rights, we'll fix you so you won't have the chance to spy on us no more," said Snuggs, grimly.

Tom thought things looked serious for him, as he did not doubt that the two rascals, particularly Jim Snuggs, were capable of going to extremes in order to get square with him. So summoning all his courage for a big effort, he suddenly wrenched himself free from the rascals and sprang for the door. Tom's hand was on the knob before they recovered from the surprise of his unexpected move, then they rushed at him. The boy yanked the door open just far enough to al-

low him to get through, and then slammed it in their faces. When they got outside Tom was in the road, making tracks for the van. They chased him for a short distance, but seeing that he outstripped them, they gave up the pursuit, seeing which the young trader slackened his gait. On reaching the van he told Chick about his encounter with the crooks.

"Gee! What were dey goin' to do wit' you?" Slivers asked.

"I couldn't say, but they meant to do me up somehow. That Jim Snuggs is a wicked scoundrel. I believe he'd just as soon shoot me as not if he had a weapon."

"How far did they chase you?"

"About a third of the way here."

"They know dat de van is somewhere down dis way, and maybe dey'll sneak down here bimeby and try to catch us off our guard."

"We'll have to keep watch to-night by turns," replied Tom. "It wouldn't be safe for us to take any chances while those chaps are so near."

"Dat's right. Which of us will keep de fust watch?"

"I guess you'd better. If they make up their minds to try to steal a march on me, they probably won't do it for two or three hours yet. They may even wait till the early hours of the morning so as to make sure we're sound asleep."

"I t'ink de best way for me to do is to hide in de bushes behind de fence, and keep my eye on de road and de van. Den dey can't sneak up wit' out I see dem."

"That's a good plan, Chick; but if you go to sleep there is no saying what might happen."

"Don't you worry about me goin' to sleep. I kin keep awake, all right. You want to close the doors wit' de chain, and dey couldn't get at you, anyway."

Chick took the revolver, fully loaded once more, jumped out of the van and got out of sight behind the fence, while Tom partly closed the doors and secured them with the chain. When the two rascals gave up the chase of Tom, they held a consultation.

"He's the slickest monkey I ever ran across," growled Snuggs.

"He is that," nodded Barney.

"He'll give us away at the next village, as sure as thunder."

"We ought to try and prevent him. His van is down the road a short distance. We'll go back to the house and wait an hour or two, then sneak down to where the van is and catch him off his guard."

"We'll do it. Let me get my hands on him again and I'll bet you that will be the last of him. He's a thorn in our side, and must be removed for good and all."

They walked back to the house and spent the next three hours playing cards and emptying the contents of a flask of whisky. It was midnight when they left the house and took their way down the road intent on wreaking vengeance on Tom Trevor. About the same time Tom relieved the watchful Chick, and the tough lad got into the van, fastened the doors on the chain, turned in on the mattress and was soon fast asleep. Tom crouched down in the bushes and kept his eyes on the road in the direction of the shanty and the railroad. He had been there about twenty minutes

when he saw two figures come in sight around the turn in the road.

"I'll bet that's the rascals," he muttered. "I'm going to give them the surprise of their lives."

It wasn't very long before the men were so close that Tom was sure of their identity, and then he prepared for action. As soon as Snuggs and Barney made out the form of the van drawn up close to the fence, they left the road and got into the same field where Tom was. The young trader observed this flank move on their part and drew further back into the shrubbery. They came on with due caution until they got opposite the van, when they paused and reconnoitered it. They now stood not quite a dozen feet away from the concealed watcher.

"The door is partly open to give 'em air," said Snuggs. "They must be asleep by this time. Probably they kept watch for a while on the lookout for us, and seein' we didn't show up, have figured that we won't trouble 'em to-night. Come, we'll take a squint into the van and see how things are there."

The crooks got over the fence and approached the wagon in a careful way. Snuggs first peered through the narrow opening between the doors, but he couldn't make out much, for it was very dark inside. Then he put up his hands thinking to open the doors, and discovered, to his disgust that they were secured by a chain which prevented them from opening more than an inch except at the bottom and top. He tried to reach the chain by putting his arm up under the doors as far as he could reach, but failed to touch it. Here was an obstacle they had not figured on, and it appeared to be insurmountable.

"Hang it all, we're blocked," snarled Snuggs, with a smothered imprecation.

"Ain't there any way of gettin' in at the front?" asked Barney.

"We can look, but I don't believe there is."

They mounted to the wagon seat, saw the outline of the flap covering the shelf on which Tom kept his stock of notions, and tried to pry it open with a jack-knife, but without the faintest result. They were at the end of their rope and did not know what to do to accomplish their purpose.

"S'pose we unhitch the two hosses and walk 'em off, then he won't be able to move the van in the mornin'. That will give us plenty of time to get out of the neighborhood before he can put the police on to us," suggested Barney.

"That's a good idea, but I know a better one," said Snuggs, with a grim chuckle, as an idea occurred to him.

"What is it?" asked Barney.

"Start a fire under the van. That'll bring 'em out, and then we can nab 'em."

"We'll do it. Funny I never thought of it. It's just the ticket."

The rascals got down and began to look around for means to carry out their plan. There was a lot of brush in the field and, gathering an armful each, they carried it to the wagon and heaped it under it. Tom at once surmised their object and prepared to defeat it.

CHAPTER XV.—A Wonderful Discovery.

The crooks went back to the field and brought two more armfuls of brush. Snuggs had part of a newspaper in his pocket, and he made it into a

kind of torch, the end of which he ignited with a match. He swung it around in the air till it burned smartly and then walked to the van. As he put one hand on the front wheel and bent down, Tom, who had crept up as near as he could behind the fence, took aim at his hand and fired. A roar of pain came from Snuggs, and the burning newspaper fell to the grass. Barney turned around, startled almost out of his wits. The report of the revolver awakened Chick, and he looked out of the van door.

"Hands up, you rascals!" cried Tom, climbing over the fence. "I've got you where the hair is short. Back up against that van, or there'll be trouble to burn for you chaps."

"Blame you!" snarled Snuggs. "You've broken my wrist."

"Serves you right. You were going to set fire to my van," replied Tom.

"Well, I'll get square with you for this," gritted the crook.

"Back up against that wagon, Hogan, do you hear?" and Tom covered him with his revolver.

Barney concluded that it would be the part of wisdom to obey. As for Snuggs, his broken wrist pained him so much that he was hardly capable of thinking of anything else.

"Bring some rope, Chick," said Tom, "and tie these chaps."

Barney was secured first without any great trouble, for he was cowed by the weapon in the young trader's hands. It was different with Snuggs. He resisted Chick's efforts to bind him, in spite of Tom's threat to shoot him, so that the latter was obliged to help his assistant out by laying hold of the rascal himself. Snuggs struggled desperately against them both, but Tom was strong and tough. He tripped the crook over on the grass and held him down while Chick bound his arms tightly to his side. Both men were then tied to separate posts and left to pass the night as best they could. In the morning they were loaded into the van like so much merchandise, and Tom told Chick to remain with them and keep an eye upon them. The young trader cut out business that morning and drove at his best speed to the town of Darien, some ten miles distant. Inquiring his way to police headquarters, he stopped in front of the building and reported to the chief that he had two crooks in his van who had escaped from the Exeter jail about two weeks before. The police chief communicated with the police department of Exeter by 'phone and satisfied himself that the statement made by the young trader was correct in every particular. He complimented Tom on his courage and shrewdness in catching the two crooks, and promised to report the facts of the case to the Exeter authorities, so that in case any reward had been offered for the apprehension of the rascals, he would be able to secure it. After getting their dinner at a restaurant, Tom and Chick proceeded on their way out into the rural districts once more. Before leaving town, however, Tom answered Miss Hutchings's letter, telling her how glad he was to hear from her, and how happy the knowledge of her friendly regard for him made him feel.

He gave her a graphic account of his third meeting with the crooks, and detailed the way he had once more captured them, and handed them over to the Darien police. Tom had very good

luck during the next three weeks, picking up many articles at a low figure which he subsequently disposed of at a handsome profit. He sold the bureau which he had modernized to a farmer's wife for \$99, and she believed she had secured a bargain, for it was a handsome piece of mahogany, and had originally cost five or six times that price when it was new. One day, the van was overtaken by a heavy thunder storm on a lonesome stretch of road, but fortunately Tom was able to reach a deserted house with a barn behind that stood not far from the road before the storm actually burst in their vicinity. He drove the horses and van into the barn just in time to escape the deluge of rain which came on the heels of the sweeping wind. While the storm was at its height, a thunderbolt struck the deserted building a few yards away with a crash that fairly stunned the boys for some moments.

"Gee! Dat was de worst I was ever up against," said Chick, with a white face, for he had been pretty badly scared. Plucky as was Tom himself, the crash of the thunderbolt had a sobering effect on him.

"Yes, it was pretty fierce," admitted the young trader. "I can see that the whole of one end of the building is down, as though sliced off with a huge knife."

The storm continued about fifteen minutes more, and then the worst of it was over in that neighborhood. Tom, however, was in no hurry to make a start. After the lapse of another half hour, he and Chick sallied forth to look more closely at the ruins of the old house. The thunderbolt had torn a gaping rent in one end of the building, from roof to cellar, and Tom stepped inside the lower floor. As Tom gazed on the wreck, he noticed something bright shining up through a mass of demoralized brick. Curious to know what it was, he began to toss the bricks this way and that in an effort to get a better view of it. It wasn't long before he saw that it was a japanned tin box. Eager to see if it contained anything of value, he redoubled his efforts until he finally reached and pulled it out of the ruins. It was locked, and not so very heavy. At that moment Chick, who had not ventured in for fear the building would fall upon him, mustered up courage enough to follow his young boss.

"What you got dere, Tom?" he asked, seeing the tin box in the young trader's hands. "A tin box, eh? Where did you find it?"

"In the wreck of the chimney."

"Dere might be somet'in' of value in it, what do you t'ink?"

"I couldn't say, Chick, as it's locked."

"Smash it open, den, wit' a brick."

"No, it's a nice box and I wouldn't like to spoil its usefulness. I might be able to open it with some of my tools."

"Maybe it's full of money," said Chick, gazing at it in a greedy way.

"More likely it holds documents of no value except to the man who owned them."

"Dat would be a shame. It ought to be full of money and den you'd be rich."

"I don't expect to get rich as quick as all that, though I hope to be well off in the course of time."

"Dere ain't no doubt in my mind but you'll have loads of money one of dese days," said Chick, nodding his head in a sage way. "You've done mighty well on dis trip so far, and dere ain't no

reason dat I kin see why you shouldn't keep de good work up right along."

"Well, the storm is over and I don't believe there is anything worth seeing in this old house, so we'll return to the barn and get the team out."

Chick had no further curiosity to investigate the house, so he preceded Tom into the open air. As soon as the van was out of the barn and ready to proceed, Tom got a hammer and a small cold chisel and commenced operations on the tin box. Chick held it while Tom hammered at the lock. Tom's object was to break the lock without disfiguring the box any more than he could help. After pottering at it for some little time, he succeeded in smashing the lock. Putting down the tools, he pulled up the cover. Part of an old newspaper was the first thing that met his eyes. Removing that, he uttered a gasp of astonishment, and so did Chick. The tin box was crammed full of American bank notes, all of them comparatively new, and showing very little use.

CHAPTER XVI.—Conclusion.

"Gee! Talk about de Count of Monte Cristo, he ain't in it wid' you," cried Chick.

"Don't talk nonsense, Chick. There may not be over a couple of thousand dollars here when we count it."

"A couple of t'ousand!" ejaculated the tough kid. "Go on, you're kiddin' me. Look at dat bunch of tens. Dere must be a t'ousand in dat alone."

"Maybe they're not all tens."

"Dat's right. Der might be some twenties, and fifties, and hundreds in it, and den dere'd be more'n a t'ousand in de bunch. Go ahead and count de treasure. I want to know how much you're wort'. If you t'ink dere's too much for you to handle, den you kin turn what you don't want over to me, and I'll open a bank somewhere, and buy an automobile, a steam yacht, a big house, and a few udder t'ings like dat. Oh, mamma! Wouldn't I be a high roller! Oh, no; of course not," and Chick grinned all over his tough, freckled face.

Tom, who was just as desirous as Chick to know how much money there was in the tin box, proceeded to count it slowly and carefully. One thousand was soon reached and the pile seemed scarcely diminished.

"Bet you a nickel dere's twenty thousand dere," said Chick, with a knowing expression.

"I'll take you, Chick."

"Make it a dime."

"You seem confident of winning?"

"Bet you life I am. Do you raise de ante?"

"Sure. The bet is a dime, and you're going to lose."

"Bet you another dime dat I don't lose," said Chick promptly.

"Say, do you want to go broke?" laughed Tom, laying the second thousand aside.

"Don't you worry about me goin' broke. I've got more money in my jeans dan you t'ink. Is dat a bet, too?"

"No, I don't want to rob you."

"Aw, where's your sportin' blood? Come up wit' your ten like a little man."

"There it is. Now give me a rest till I get through counting."

There was still a number of bills of large de-

nomination in the box when Tom announced the twentieth thousand and Chick swept the stakes into his pocket. Altogether, Tom's find footed up close on to \$30,000.

"Nobody kin say you ain't rich now," said Chick.

"But this money doesn't belong to me, Chick," replied Tom.

"It don't? Who else does it belong to, den?"

"The person who owns this property."

"What you talkin' about? You found it, and findin's is keepings."

Tom didn't care to argue the matter, so he stowed the box of money carefully away in the wagon and drove on up the road. About sundown they saw a farmhouse in the near distance and Tom made his way there. He told the woman he'd like to make a trade in notions for supper for himself and his companion. The woman jumped at the offer and told them to sit right down at the table, as the meal was all ready to be served up. During the supper Tom asked for information about the owners of the old house down the road.

"Nobody owns the place. It is to be sold for unpaid taxes soon," said the woman's husband.

"The owner died ten years ago and left no relatives, so there was no one to claim the property."

Chick grinned at Tom, as much as to say, findings is keepings in this case sure. After the meal Tom paid the woman for their supper in ribbons, thread, and such things, which she wanted. He also traded some tinware for a batch of papers and old clothes. Then he obtained permission to camp out in the field near the house all night. Next morning he and Chick continued on their route.

"I'm satisfied now that I have a good right to the money in the tin box," he said to his companion, "and so I'm going to keep it and give up the trading business for something that has a future in it. I have an idea I'll locate in Exeter, and I hope you'll stick to me just the same."

"Bet your life I will. I wouldn't lose you for not'in'," replied Chick, in an earnest tone.

So they went on, Tom outlining his plans for getting on in the world and Chick listened eagerly to all he said. They reached a small city two days later and there Tom found two letters awaiting him at the post-office. One was from Alice Hutchings, and the other was from the police department of Exeter notifying him to appear in town on a certain near date to testify against Jim Snuggs and Barney Hogan. Tom then decided to sell his outfit and give up his trade-mark of "Trading Tom" for good and all, though it was not without some regret that he relinquished the business in which he had found both pleasure and profit.

He selected Exeter as the scene of his future efforts for two reasons—it was a thriving little town for one thing, and for another, Alice Hutchings lived there, and he wanted to be within visiting distance of her. So next day he advertised his van and horses for sale, and soon found a purchaser who wanted to use the outfit for the express business. As soon as the bargain was concluded, and the money paid over, Tom and Chick took a train back to Exeter. On their arrival they put up at a second-class hotel, a very respectable house. Both boys were fitted out in new clothes, and would scarcely have been recognized

by anyone who had known them as Trading Tom and his assistant. Tom called first on the police and then paid a visit to Alice Hutchings, who was delighted to see him again. He told her about the money he had found, and how it was his intention to stay at Exeter and make the town his future scene of action.

"I will introduce you to my father," she said, happy that Tom was going to remain in Exeter, "and you can talk with him about your plans. He will advise and help you all he can to oblige me."

A week later the trial of the two crooks came off, and they were easily convicted. They got the limit, and were sent to the State prison at once, where they still are doing out their time. Mr. Hutchings, after a long and confidential talk with Tom, to whom he took an immediate fancy, offered him an opening in his bank, and advised him to invest his money in gilt-edged securities. Tom gladly accepted the banker's offer and also his suggestion. He secured Chick a position as office boy in a wholesale house, where he had opportunities for advancement. Today Chick is one of the best salesmen of the house, and no one to look at him would think he was once a tough boy who handled the English language very carelessly. Tom is cashier of the Exeter National Bank, and is engaged to be married to Alice Hutchings, with her parents' full consent. He is worth about \$50,000, and a part of this he is expending in a new cottage in which to place his lovely bride-to-be.

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Charlie Cooper's Curves

or

THE STAR PLAYER OF THE UNKNOWN NINE

By Gaston Garne

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XII.—(continued)

He walked back to the net that was drawn across the front of the grand-stand and spoke to his wife and sister-in-law.

The faces of both were very pale, but there was a gleam of hope in the bright eyes of Marjorie.

"Charlie will be here, Fred," she said assuringly. "It can't be possible that anything serious has happened to him. What time is it now?"

"Eight minutes to three," was the reply. "They want the game started right on time, too. I don't know what to do. Like you, I feel that it can't be possible that anything serious has happened to the boy, but what detains him, if that is not the case?"

"He will be here."

But it was plain that the girl hardly meant it. She was trying to make herself believe it.

Mrs. Roberts said nothing.

It was plain that she had given the boy up as gone, though one look at her face would have told that.

Pretty soon the home team came in from their practice.

Harry Hodge was throwing the ball to Ben Handy now, for he had decided to go in and pitch and do the best he could.

A colored man appeared with a pail of white-wash and a brush and proceeded to whiten the home plate so it could be seen plainly by the pitcher.

The Yonkers manager came up to Roberts, and they had a talk for fully five minutes.

Then the crowd grew impatient.

"Play ball! Play ball!" came from all sides, and then a series of cat-calls sounded.

Roberts felt duty-bound to tell the nine to go ahead.

They were to be first at the bat.

The brand-new balls were tossed to the umpire, and taking one from the pasteboard box, he tossed it to the pitcher.

"Play ball!" he cried out loud enough for everyone to hear.

Ben Handy was first at the bat and he stepped up, looking as though he was going to a funeral.

As the first ball was thrown by the pitcher a man with blond whiskers and wearing eyeglasses arose from one of the front seats in the grand-stand and looked squarely at Roberts.

"I'll wager a thousand dollars that Yonkers wins the game!" the man exclaimed, flashing a roll of bills.

Roberts hesitated.

"Take the bet, Mr. Roberts; I am here!"

As the words rang out Charlie Cooper, attired in his uniform, appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ben Spikes Turns Up At the Right Time.

At the very moment that Bill Butts hurled Charlie Cooper into the river a schooner loaded with brick appeared around a dock a hundred yards from the spot where the boy went down.

The catboat sped on like a thing of life, the villain steering her never once looking behind.

It was quite close to the shore where Charlie had been thrown overboard to what seemed to be certain death, but the channel ran in there, so the water was very deep and the tide strong.

The brick schooner was breasting the tide up the river, and, though the wind was strong and fair, was making rather slow progress.

Bill Butts thought he had not been seen by mortal eyes when he did his murderous work, but he was mistaken.

A man at the bow of the schooner had just caught a glimpse of the act, and as the prow of the vessel rounded the dock he leaned over and looked ahead into the water.

Then it was that he saw a human head rise above the surface and saw a struggling form.

He thought it strange that the person should struggle so, but he had seen just enough to make him think that his hands were tied.

It was Charlie he saw, of course. The boy was struggling desperately to keep his head above the water.

It occurred to him, as frightened as he was, to try and float.

He lay flat upon his back, and being an excellent swimmer, he managed to do this.

The tide was bearing him swiftly toward the approaching schooner, though he had not seen the craft as yet.

Suddenly he heard a splash not far from him and the next minute a voice exclaimed:

"Stick it out, boy! I'll soon be there!"

A thrill shot through the boy's frame.

The voice sounded very familiar to him, but it was not that of Bill Butts, that was quite certain.

But, anyhow, he was going to be saved!

"I'll pitch the game against Yonkers, after all!" was the thought that flashed through his mind.

Though it was but a minute or two, it seemed fifty times longer before he felt a hand touch him.

"Yer are tied, hey?" said the voice of his rescuer. "Well, keep cool an' I'll soon fix yer all right."

The man who had leaped from the schooner to save the helpless boy drew a knife and opened the blade.

Then he quickly severed the rope that held Charlie's hands together.

The first thing the young baseball pitcher did was to tear the gag from his mouth.

"Ben Spikes!" he gasped.

Just as sure as he was swimming in the waters of the Hudson River his rescuer was the man who had left Farmville, declaring he would not return until he had found what had become of Charlie's father and track George Orris down.

"Charlie Cooper!" the man cried in astonishment, and then his head went under the water, for he forgot where he was and ceased swimming for a moment.

But he came up quick enough, and then they found the schooner right alongside them.

"Let me have your knife, Ben," said Charlie: "I want to cut the rope that is tied around my ankles."

"Oh, I'll do that," was the retort. "Jest kick up, so I kin git hold of 'em."

The rope had hardly been severed when Charlie was able to catch hold of the forechains of the schooner. The vessel was low down in the water from the way she was loaded, and it was easy for the boy to reach the chains with his hand.

In spite of what he had gone through, he was as strong and agile as a young lion, and he was up out of the water and assisting Ben Spikes in less than a minute.

"How in thunder did you git in ther water, boy?" called out the man at the wheel, who was the only one on deck, as Charlie walked aft with his rescuer.

"A scoundrel threw me in," was the reply. "There goes the boat I was thrown from, way up the river there, close to the opposite shore."

The young ball-tosser pointed out the catboat, though there were plenty of boats of a similar style on the river near Yonkers.

"That's ther one!" exclaimed Ben Spikes.

"Chucked you overboard, you say?" questioned the captain, for it was he who was steering the boat.

"Yes, he tied my hands and ankles first."

The man's eyes stuck out when he heard this. Charlie thought he had better tell all about it, and he did so.

The eyes of Ben Spikes glistened as he heard how the boy had been decoyed to the water front and then knocked into the boat and carried out into the river to be drowned.

"Who do yer think is at ther bottom of it, Charlie?" he asked hoarsely. "Do yer think it's George Orris?" He might have it in fur yer 'cause yer didn't let him kill me that night in the woods near your home."

"It is quite likely that he is at the bottom of it. That is what my employer thinks."

"Who is your employer, Charlie—what are yer doin' way up this way, anyhow?"

"I am traveling with a baseball nine and making lots of money, Spitfire. Where have you been all this time?"

"I'm glad ter hear that you're makin' money by playin' ball, Charlie. As fur me, I've been knockin' around ever since I quit Farmville that night. I don't never mean ter go back until I have found your father for you, lad. I can't help thinkin' but that he's alive, indeed I can't. An' I swore I'd bring George Orris where he belongs, yer know. I told you an' your mother an' grandmother that I wouldn't come back till I'd done somethin' ter pay up fur ther wrong I done yer."

The two had walked to the bow as they conversed, so the captain did not hear what they said.

But it made little difference whether he knew it or not, only that it would have entailed the answering of a lot of questions.

"I knew you had reformed, and that you meant what you said, Ben," said Charlie. "Now, I want you to quit this job and travel with me as a sort of protector. I know the manager will not object to it, for what has happened to me this morning will make him understand the necessity of me

having someone to look out for me—someone who knows George Orris, in fact."

"I'll try an' make it so I kin quit my job here an' go with you, Charlie. But jest now I'm ther only man ther captain's got ter make ther trip with him."

While they were talking the wind suddenly died out.

The schooner was no longer forging ahead.

"Ben," called the captain, "we're in fur it, I guess. We'll have to go in somewhere an' anchor, or else tie fast to a dock. I thought ther wind was goin' to hold for a while, but it ain't. It's gittin' as hot as thunder, too."

Spikes was forced to help with the boat now.

Charlie walked aft, and as he did so he noticed that the vessel was slowly drifting down the river, the sails flapping and hanging in an idle way.

"I would like to be put off at Yonkers," he said, "if you please, captain."

"We can't make Yonkers, lad," was the reply. "We'll set yer ashore at ther first place we come to. That's ther best we can do."

The star player of the Unknown nine looked at his watch.

It was nothing but a common timepiece and the water had got in it and caused it to stop.

He saw that the hands marked a quarter to twelve, which must have been about the time he was thrown overboard by the villainous Bill Butts.

Charlie began to grow uneasy.

He was thinking of the ball game that afternoon.

The fact that he had not been saved from a horrible death was not on his mind half as much as the game was.

He saw that the captain and Ben Spikes were trying to swing the prow of the schooner around and head her for the Yonkers side of the river.

He looked over the stern and around on the deck of the heavily loaded craft, and seeing no small boat, asked Spikes if they had one.

"No, Charlie," was the reply. "We had our boat smashed by a tug yesterday, an' we jest let it go adrift. But we'll git yer ashore all right."

It was over an hour before they made a landing, though, and then they were about six miles below Yonkers.

Charlie was glad to get ashore.

He was wet to the skin and anxious to get back to the hotel to get on dry clothing.

Ben Spikes promised to come up and see the ball game and have a talk with him after the game, and then Charlie made for the trolley and boarded a car.

But then there came another delay, for there was a slight accident on the road and the cars were blocked for a while.

When Charlie Cooper at length reached the hotel in Yonkers he found that his friends had gone to the ball grounds.

The clerk told him of the excitement and anxiety his sudden disappearance had caused, and advised him to go to the police station and let them know that he had turned up.

Charlie was not long in getting into dry clothes.

Then he did as the clerk advised, and that necessitated more lost time.

When he finally reached the grounds he found that it lacked but five minutes to three and that

the Yonkers team were in the field at practice.

The boy was forced to pay his way in, since the gate tender did not know him.

He hurried along through the crowd and climbed over the rail and got into the dressing-room without being recognized by anyone.

Then it occurred to him to give them a surprise.

Charlie's uniform was right there, for the boys had brought his grip along, in hopes that he would turn up at the last minute.

He was not long in getting into the uniform.

But as quick as he was, he saw that the game was starting when he came out of the dressing-room.

He cast a swift glance around, and seeing Fred Roberts standing behind the catcher, he made a beeline for him.

He got there just in time to hear the offer of the wager and to utter the words recorded at the close of our last chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Charlie In His Old Form.

"Hurrah!" cried Fred Roberts, as he suddenly found the use of his tongue. Then he caught the boy about the neck and gave him a squeeze.

The game was stopped instantly, for when the boys of the Unknown nine shouted out that their pitcher had turned up at the last minute the umpire held the ball and called time.

"You had better take the bet, Mr. Roberts," said Charlie. "I am ready to play ball. I haven't time to tell you what happened to me just now, but I will before the game is over."

"All right," said the delighted manager, and then he drew a roll of bills from his pocket and turned to make the wager with the man with the blond beard and eyeglasses.

But the fellow was not to be found.

"He left all of a sudden when you grabbed the young fellow around the neck," explained one of the spectators. "I never saw a fellow get out of sight so quickly."

Roberts looked around and found a policeman standing right at the foot of the grand-stand.

"Did you see the man who offered to bet a thousand dollars on the game?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "But I didn't see where he went."

"Well, go and find him! He is a would-be murderer."

"What!"

"I have strong reason to believe that he is the fellow who tried to blow our auto up in Paterson on Saturday."

"I'll send in a general alarm," said the officer, and away he went like a shot.

The game now proceeded.

Charlie was shaking hands with the members of the team and telling them that he had been in swimming in the Hudson.

Rolly Dawson did not seem at all disappointed when he found that he was not to play.

He thought too much of Charlie Cooper for that.

"You had better go and let the women folks see you, Charlie," said Roberts, as Ben Handy hit out a liner and reached first.

Charlie walked back and had a few words with them.

If there ever was a delighted girl it was Margorie.

"I told Fred you would come!" she exclaimed. "What happened to you, Charlie?"

"There is too much to tell just now," was the reply. "You will have to wait till after the game."

Then he walked back and took his position with the batters.

If the Unknown nine had shown no "ginger" before, they were full of it now. The return of the star pitcher at the opportune moment put new life in them, and they were now ready to play the game of their lives.

Joe Murray was at the bat now, and after two strikes had been called on him he sent out a fly that the right-fielder failed to get.

He reached first and Handy got second bag.

The spectators opened their eyes.

"Something was doing," after all.

Harrington came next and filled the bases with a neat single.

Reilly sacrificed and Handy came in.

One run for the Unknowns.

It is just possible that Harry Hodge wanted to do a little too much, for he struck out, much to his disgust.

Schmidt followed and went out on a foul fly.

That wound up their half of the first inning.

Then Charlie Cooper stepped into the box to show the crowd what he could do with the ball.

There was just a slight pain in his head from the cut he had received, and he was working on an empty stomach, but Charlie was determined to win the game.

His impromptu bath in the Hudson had not hurt him a bit, and as he had long since calmed down from the excitement he was perfectly able to pitch in his old-time form.

Yonkers put its best batters to lead off, for they wanted to get in a run or two in the first inning to enthuse the crowd and get a good start.

The players had of course heard all about the great playing of the Unknown nine, but not one of them had an idea that they would lose the game to the boys.

It did not seem possible, in fact.

But it was possible, as the sequel will prove.

When the first man at the bat struck out there was a silence for the space of a second or two and then a hundred throats opened in a cheer for the boy pitcher of the Unknowns.

They simply could not help it, for they saw in him a real wonder.

The next man up nodded pleasantly to Charlie and grinned.

There was no doubt but that he meant business.

Charlie sent in a quick drop in answer to Ben Handy's signal.

Whiz! The ball whirled through the empty air and landed into the young catcher's hands.

"One strike!" called out the umpire.

The next was a bit too high and the Yonkers man did not try for it.

One ball and one strike.

Charlie then sent in a nice inshoot that cut the plate in the very centre.

The batter failed to strike at it, but a strike was called, just the same.

(To be continued)

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

3 DEER WALK INTO TOWN AND ARE SHOT

Deer-hunting is pretty good in the town limits of French Gulch, Redding, Cal.

James Leas killed two bucks in the town, and Charles C. Fox, merchant, killed a third buck also inside the town.

SAWDUST'S CHARM BRINGS THEM BACK

The big top still calls Maude and Frank Cromwell, trapeze performers who were seriously injured in Chicago when they fell 50 feet during a circus performance.

After several weeks in the hospital they have announced that they are going back to try it again.

TO SAVE CHICKENS FROM CROWS

In his monthly news service for August, Edward Howe Forbush, director of ornithology for Massachusetts, reports a simple device for protecting chickens from crows, which is said by an observer to have been tried with excellent results. A few bricks were soaked in kerosene and then placed on the chicken range, about four or five bricks to the acre. The crows seemed to avoid these bricks. If there is anything in this it might be tried for a cornfield.

HOME FOR CONVALESCENT HORSES IN GERMANY

The care and kindness with which the Germans treat dumb animals are well known. In many towns, especially in south Germany, drivers are requested at the foot of the long hills to show consideration for their horses by taking one or two extra horses to help them pull their load up the hill. A home for convalescent horses has been built at Frankenberg, Saxony, to be used by the horses belonging to the municipality.

Whenever a new horse arrives at this haven of refuge, data concerning the animal are taken down and the animal properly listed. Clean quarters, the right kind of feed, thorough inspection and constant care are helping to make this home of genuine service to the city, and a real boom to dozens of faithful horses.

LORD GREY ADVISES BRITISH TO KEEP THEIR WALKING LEGS

"Keep your legs," was the advice Viscount Grey of Fallodon recently gave to the boys of Epsom College. He warned them against giving up walking and riding bicycles because the means of communication have been so much improved, and said even a middle-aged man is better for walking twenty miles a day or riding fifty on a wheel.

Viscount Grey is doubtful whether all the modern mechanical contrivances which have become part of everyday life are of benefit to humanity and warned his audience against neglecting their minds and bodies because mechanical genius has devised ways of amusing persons without requiring them to make any effort on their own behalf.

LAUGHS

"I hear you have left Stingo & Co." "Yes; I'm in business for myself now." "What are you doing?" "Looking for another job."

Wife—Richard, I wish you would take care of baby for an hour or two. I am going to have a tooth pulled. Husband—See here, dearie, you mind the baby, and I'll go and get a couple of teeth pulled.

Brushe—Who is that solemn-looking individual? Penn—That's Groves. He writes patent medicine ads. He can describe a disease so that the healthiest man alive will think he has got it.

Clarissa—Our minister is so good that he won't even perform a marriage ceremony. Melissa—What's that got to do with his being good? Clarissa—He says his conscience won't let him participate in any game of chance.

Mrs. Bacon—Who was that man you were bowing and smiling so to at the gate just now? Mr. Bacon—Oh, that's the installment man. He's just been taking the piano away from next door, and I was thanking him.

A stranger entered the postoffice the other day, and, approaching the ladies' general delivery window, said: "Any letters for John Drake?" "Next window, Mr. Drake," replied the polite attendant. "This window is for ducks only."

Mrs. Flatbush—So your husband didn't go to the war? Mrs. Bensonhurst—No, he didn't. "What was the matter? Was he afraid?" "Yes, that was the trouble. If he went he was afraid he'd just make a slaughterhouse of the battlefield."

A small boy was reciting in a geography class. The teacher was trying to teach him the points of the compass. She exclaimed: "On your right is the east, your left the west, and in front of you is the north. Now, what is behind you?" The boy studied for a moment, then puckered up his face and bawled: "I know it! I told ma you'd see the patch in my pants."

THE WORTH MYSTERY

Ned Hastings was a clerk in the Brainford Bank and a young man who commanded the respect and confidence of all knew him. In fact, no one stood higher in the estimation of the community than the young clerk.

Ned was well liked by his associates at the bank, and even the surly old janitor, who was not wont to speak well of any one, had a good word for Ned.

The young man's friends considered him a very lucky fellow, too, for it was understood that he was engaged to the heiress, Mabel Worth, whose uncle, Richard Worth, was the heaviest stockholder in the bank, and a reputed millionaire.

Pretty Mabel was an orphan, but her Uncle Richard, who was a childless old bachelor, had adopted her, and meant to leave her all his fortune.

The rumored engagement of Ned Hastings and Mabel Worth was a correct report. The young people had loved each other for a long time, and they had plighted their troth with the full consent of Mabel's Uncle Richard.

But, strange to say, Ned Hastings and Richard Worth had never met.

This circumstance is easily explained. Richard Worth had been absent in Europe five years, and it was during his absence that Ned and Mabel had met and loved.

Correspondents had, however, given Richard Worth such an excellent account of Ned, that when the young man, by letter, requested the permission of the millionaire to address his love suit to Mabel his consent was given.

Richard Worth was very eccentric as well as very rich, and he had never had a picture taken in his life. So, not only had Ned never seen the old gentleman in person, but he had not even seen a photograph of him.

The time for the marriage of Mabel and Ned had been set, and Mr. Worth had written them from Paris that he should return to Brainford in time to be present at the wedding.

Later a cable message from her uncle informed Mabel that he would sail for New York on the *Chancellor*, a first-class transatlantic steamer of a popular line.

Mabel went to New York to meet the steamer, accompanied by an old gentleman who had formerly been Mr. Worth's business partner.

But the *Chancellor* had arrived the day before, and inquiry elicited the information that the same-day Richard Worth had taken the evening train for Brainford.

Then the mystery began. Richard Worth had not reached his destination. On the contrary, it seemed that he had mysteriously disappeared. Mabel and Richard Worth's old business partner were filled with consternation when this became known to them.

They imagined at once that the missing man might have met with foul play, for the captain of the steamer, who was a friend of the old millionaire, stated that Mr. Worth had confided the fact to him that he carried a splendid collection of most valuable diamonds, which he had obtained in Europe, on his person in a money-belt.

Mabel employed the best detectives to search

for the missing man, and then she and Mr. Worth's old friend returned to Brainford.

Almost the first person to welcome Mabel, besides Ned Hastings, was one Ralph Warwick, an old suitor of the maiden, whom she had rejected a year before, and who stated that he had just returned from California.

Ralph Warwick seemed inclined to renew his suit for the hand of Mabel, and as he left her on the evening of her return from New York, and saw that Ned Hastings, who, with himself, had met the young lady at the depot, was indeed, as he had already heard, his successful suitor, Ralph's face assumed a strange expression as he muttered to himself: "This is fate playing into my hands, for as sure as the heavens stand, Ned Hastings was the man I saw in the gully that night."

Some days elapsed, and the detectives employed by Mabel traced Richard Worth from a hotel in New York City to a train bound for Brainford. But there the trail ended.

Several days later, however, some hunters found the body of the missing man in a gully where the train had stopped for a supply of water for the engine.

Richard Worth had been murdered and robbed. It was the theory of the officers that the victim had been stabbed on the platform of the car and hurled off by the assassins, who then followed him, robbed the body and dragged it into the gully.

Some months before, upon arising one morning, Ned Hastings experienced a singular sensation of weariness, for which he could not account, for he had retired early, and had not fatigued himself the preceding day.

As he was dressing, he found, to his astonishment, that his boots, which he had neatly polished just before retiring for the night, were wet, and stained with mud. More than this, taking up the coat he had worn the day before, he found that it was wet, and also his hat.

The day before had been cloudless, but going to the window and looking out, Ned saw that during the night a heavy rain had fallen.

He had no recollection of leaving his room the preceding night, but now he sank into a chair, and the conviction that he must have done so forced itself upon his mind.

"Good heavens! I must have walked in my sleep!" thought Ned.

The young bank clerk placed himself in the hands of a physician, and thereafter had no further trouble of that nature, and thinking himself completely cured, he soon ceased to think about the matter.

But on the morning following the day when Mabel Worth went to the city to meet her uncle, Ned Hastings awoke with a sense of fatigue again, for which there seemed to be no reason.

As on the preceding occasion, the condition of his wearing apparel told the story. Again he had walked in his sleep.

Then the young man calculated how long it had been since his last sleep-walking experience, and so fixed that date as well as the present one in his mind. His last experience was on November 3. He tried to see if he could remember where he had been in his sleep, but he was only able to recall a memory of what seemed a terrible dream, without definite meaning.

The body of Richard Worth was brought to Brainford, and Ned was there with Mabel when the remains arrived. The betrothed lovers entered the darkened parlor to look upon the face of the dead. When Ned saw the face of the dead man he started back with an exclamation of alarm and astonishment, as he cried:

"Merciful heavens! It is the face of my terrible dream!" And suddenly all that dreadful vision, which he had previously tried to recall, in vain, rushed back upon him in all its horror and awful distinctness.

"It was not a dream, but an actual reality! The memory of what occurred during the time I last walked in my sleep has come back to me!"

"What is it that so agitates you, Ned, dear?" asked Mabel.

"I—I thought of one whom I used to know when I saw your dead uncle's face," faltered Ned.

Leaving Mabel perplexed at his strange behavior, Ned excused himself and left the house. He reached his room in a state of mind bordering on insanity. He saw, as vividly as possible, the scene where the body of Richard Worth had been found, and which had since been described to him. He saw the murdered man and another shadowy form, and he saw himself there beside the dead.

The awful thought entered his mind that during his sonambulist state he had killed Richard Worth. He recollected now that besides the belt of diamonds, Mabel had told him that a diamond cross, with his name engraved on the back, which her uncle always wore on his neck scarf, was missing, and he knew that he had seen that diamond cross on the night of November 4.

Ned owned a little casket of foreign wood, which had been his mother's, and in which he kept such articles as he particularly treasured. Tremblingly he unlocked it. For a moment he could not find courage to raise the lid, dreading what he might find there. But at last he opened it. The diamond cross was the first object to meet his gaze. Hastily he turned the cross over, and there on the back he saw the name, "Richard Worth."

At that moment there came a gentle tap on the door, and Mabel entered. Ned uttered a startled cry, and tried to close the casket, but in his haste to conceal the diamond cross he overturned the casket and the jewels fell at the feet of his promised bride.

"My uncle's diamond cross! How came it here? Speak, Edward, speak!" she cried.

"Mabel, I will tell you all!"

As he concluded, Mabel said: "How can such a thing be?"

Did she doubt his truthfulness? He could scarcely tell. They were at the window, and at that moment he saw a man passing on the opposite side of the street. There was something strangely familiar in the man's appearance. Then, like a flash, the truth dawned upon him.

"That is the very man I saw beside your murdered uncle in the gully!" exclaimed Ned, pointing.

The man turned his head while the eyes of the lovers were yet upon him, and both saw his face.

"Ralph Warwick!" exclaimed Mabel.

"I will prove my innocence to you, dearest, by

convicting Ralph Warwick. Now I go to follow him. Do not lose faith in me, come what may," said Ned. As he spoke he darted from the room.

Ralph Warwick was still in sight. Stealthily Ned followed Warwick until he saw him enter the dwelling of a clairvoyant who enjoyed considerable local celebrity. Ned remained watching the house until Warwick reappeared. Then he entered. The clairvoyant was under obligations to Ned, and he told the young man that Warwick was a firm believer in his powers, and frequently called to consult him. In conclusion the clairvoyant said: "He is coming again tonight. He has made an appointment with me, and I am to go into a trance, as usual, and read the future for him."

"I will give you fifty dollars to allow me to impersonate you tonight when Warwick returns," said Ned.

The clairvoyant agreed, and that evening, made up exactly like him, Ned was there when Warwick arrived, and in an adjoining room he had Mabel and two detectives concealed, so that they could overhear all.

"Tell me what I shall do to make sure a certain secret of mine, which I wish to guard above all things, may not be found out?" asked Warwick, when Ned seemed to be in a trance.

"Remove the jewels from the place where you have hidden them. Secrete the diamonds somewhere else, and then leave the place," replied Ned promptly.

"Your power is wonderful! Diamonds! Ah! you hit it at once!" muttered Warwick.

Soon after that, when the "clairvoyant" came out of his trance, Warwick left the house, followed by Ned and the detectives. Warwick led them into the grounds of a deserted mansion. There he secured a spade and went to the foot of a great tree, near a broken marble pedestal. Throwing off his coat, Warwick began to dig.

Ned and the two officers crept near and concealed themselves from view of the suspect. Presently Warwick unearthed a box of some size. As he knelt to lift it out of the hole he had excavated, Ned and the officers were upon him, and the handcuffs were placed on his wrists.

Then the box was opened, and in it was found a blood-stained overcoat, which was afterward identified as belonging to Warwick, and Richard Worth's belt of jewels.

Warwick was conveyed to prison, and a few days later he confessed his guilt. He had met the millionaire on the train, and as they were both on the platform of one of the coaches, at the water station, he had stabbed the old gentleman and thrown him off, following himself and robbing his victim. Warwick had seen Ned at the scene of the murder, and decided, from his conduct, that he was walking in his sleep. The assassin had seen Ned pick up the diamond cross, and when he learned that the young man was Mabel's lover he decided to direct suspicion to him, hoping that he might thus remove a rival.

In due time Warwick paid the penalty of his crime, and later on Ned and Mabel became man and wife.

Though years have elapsed since the terrible night of November the third, Ned has never since walked in his sleep.

CURRENT NEWS

NEW 22-MILE PIPE

The California town of Vallejo is now being supplied with water from a distant reservoir through a one-piece pipe twenty-two miles long. The parts of this remarkable pipe, says Popular Science Monthly, were made into one piece by arc welding instead of riveting.

676 AUTO DEATHS IN 4 WEEKS ENDING NOV. 6 SET NEW RECORD

Deaths due to automobile operations in the seventy-eight larger cities of the United States during the four weeks ending Nov. 6 were 676, a total greater than those for any like period since the Commerce Department began compiling automobile fatalities, early in 1925.

During the same period a year ago the deaths were 612, and in four weeks ending Oct. 9, 1926, they were 656.

2,000 STUDENTS WITH MONOCLES STARTLE AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

It took all Sir Austen Chamberlain's characteristic imperturbability to remain serious when at the ceremony of his installation as Lord Rector of Glasgow University recently he was faced by 2,000 boy and girl students, all wearing monocles like himself, singing in unison: "Oh, Austen, Dear, We Love You So!"

Like his famous father, Joseph, Britain's Foreign Secretary cannot very well be imagined without his single eyeglass, and there were loud protests from the students when he changed it for horn-rim spectacles to sign the document appointing him to his new dignity.

TWO DEER SWIM TO SAFETY AS DOGS FIGHT ON LAKE'S SHORE

Automobiles passing Croton Lake, in the northern part of Westchester County, White Plains, N. Y. recently witnessed an unusual race between two deer which had been chased through the Croton hills to the lake by five dogs.

The deer fled down a steep bank and, jumping into the lake, headed for the opposite shore. The dogs got into a fight among themselves and by the time they jumped into the lake to continue the chase the deer had disappeared in the deep underbrush. The dogs tried to pick up the trail, but failed.

TEST CONTINENT DRIFT

One of the most bizarre, yet significant, theories ever advanced by scientists is now being tested by a network of radio stations covering most of the earth's surface.

The hypothesis, offered by Prof. Alfred Wegener of the University of Graz, Austria, and Dr. William Schutte, German geologist, are that all the land masses of the earth once formed a single continent before splitting up into the continents we know; that they are still re-forming and perceptibly drifting westward and equatorward; that Europe is shrinking, France and Ger-

many sinking, and Norway and Sweden are rising higher from the sea!

Observations taken at the radio stations at five-year intervals, says Popular Science Monthly, will either prove or disprove this strangest of theories. Whether Greenland is drifting westward at the rate of 100 feet a year, and other masses at a slower rate, as is now tentatively held, may be established definitely in ten years.

Professor Wegener points out as evidence in support of his theory that the outlines of the present day continents fit neatly into the supposed super-continent as a jig-saw puzzle. The west coast of Africa, for example, fits almost perfectly the eastern coast of North and South America.

Professor Wegener says that the attraction of the sun and moon on the earth's surface broke up the super-continent and cause the western drift. How the solid earth can drift is explained by the fact that the surface rock, called Sial, is lighter than the viscous Sima rock nearer the earth's core, on which it floats.

EDISON CALLS ATOM "BABY OF SCIENCE"

A scientific theory, recently established, has almost unlimited possibilities in the field of invention, says Thomas A. Edison according to the Associated Press.

The theory is that by which an atom of helium has been broken into atoms of hydrogen. Mr. Edison said:

"The helium atom has been broken into atoms of hydrogen. It is a theoretical step at present, but it has great possibilities. How great, no man can tell. You remember Faraday discovered a means of getting electricity from induced magnetism and was asked what good his discovery was, replied, 'What good is a baby?'"

The electric light bulb, foundation stone of the \$7,500,000,000 electric light and power industry, is what Edison believes to be his greatest invention.

The statement was made recently, the forty-seventh anniversary of the bulb. It was just forty-seven years ago that Edison, after laborious experiments, discovered that a bit of charred thread sealed in a bulb from which air had been pumped, could be made to burn for forty-eight hours. Since that day many improvements have been made, but that was the beginning.

The inventor, who is eighty-four years old, talked of his other inventions and the field of invention as a profession for young men. Regarding the latter, he said:

"The field is unlimited. If I were to begin my career over again I would turn to electric light and heat and chemical reactions. The young man so inclined should have no hesitation in taking up invention as a profession, provided he has imagination and the will to work."

Edison said he really is one hundred and thirty-five years old—because the average man would take 135 years to put in as many hours of work as he has.

NEWS FROM EVERYWHERE

IS IT HOT ABOVE?

Is it boiling hot, far above the clouds? J. F. Whipple, British meteorologist, and Prof. F. A. Lindemann of Oxford, believe that recent experiments in France have indicated that if we could go thirty miles up into the atmosphere we would find a temperature of 220 degrees above zero, instead of the traditional freezing temperature.

NOVEL SCHOOL

There are grammar schools, and night schools, and trade schools, and detective schools, but the newest and strangest of all has been opened recently in Needham, Mass. It is a whooping cough school, and is for the benefit of children who have sufficiently recovered from the disease to continue their studies but who must remain away from school in order to protect the other pupils. This special school is held in the portable building on the hospital grounds.

FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH

When scientific men talk about 45 million years, "more or less," we are quite confident a few millions make little difference. Of course it would never do to say 44 millions. However, if you are going to guess, it's as well to guess in large numbers. Professor Loomis of Amherst has written a book on the Horse in which, according to the report we have seen, it is said that "the history of the horse is probably the most completely known of any of the animals." He traces it back 45,000,000 years, "more or less," when its far-off ancestor was no larger than a fox terrier, with four toes on its front feet and three on its hind feet. Fortunately all these toes have merged into one during the long period of development.

MYSTERY OF DIET

Who can answer the mystery of the splendid physical development of the ancient Hawaiians? Recent investigations have shown they had none of these three important foods: milk, whole wheat and cod liver oil—yet they grew to magnificent stature.

Whatever the diet was, it must have contained something we do not use, something very potent. We know that their diet included 138 kinds of edible fish, thirty-one fowls, breadfruit, ferns, bananas, yams, taro, poi, pandanus and various types of seaweed, but which one (if it was only one) played the role of the all-important food, we do not know.

DRIED ORANGE JUICE

In the future compact little packages of dried orange juice will probably form an essential part of ships' supplies. It is well known that citrus fruits are rich in vitamin C which has the property of preventing scurvy, a disease from which sailors on long voyages used to suffer greatly in years past.

Orange juice can be dried and still retain its health-giving vitamins after long periods of time, recent experiments have shown. A mixture of orange juice and sugar, when removed from a partial vacuum where it had been left for five years, still retained its power to prevent scurvy in guinea pigs living on a diet otherwise free from vitamin C.

\$500,000,000 ANIMAL FUND PROVIDED IN WILL

Establishment of a \$500,000,000 trust fund to be used in the prosecution of persons cruel to animals and for the protection of animals and game in all parts of the world is provided for in the will of Stacy Anson Ransom, scientist, who died recently.

The fund would be accumulated from the investment of \$40,000 which is provided in the will on file in Probate Court at Washington. Half of the income would be used to protect animals and game and the remainder would be accumulated and invested until it reaches \$500,000,000.

Several others bequests were made and a \$50,000 trust fund was established for the benefit of Mrs. Edith Ransom, the widow.

HAS HAIR WAVED, DRESSES IN SILK FOR SUICIDE

Miss Charlotte Vogel, 44 years old, for twenty years a teacher in the public schools of Newark, N. J., committed suicide by inhaling illuminating gas in her apartment at 1162 Broad street in that city, after having had her hair waved and dressing herself in silk underwear and a silk kimono. Two of three notes left by Miss Vogel emphasized these unusual preparations and asked that particular care should be taken not to disarrange either her hair or her clothing.

Frank G. Hall, who has an apartment on the same floor as that of Miss Vogel, smelled gas, traced it to her rooms and with the janitor of the building forced an entrance into the flat. They found Miss Vogel's body on a couch in the kitchen. Gas was escaping from four open jets of the range and one in a wall.

Three notes, one addressed to the county physician, another "To the World in General and My Friends in Particular," and the third, "To Tiny," were found in the apartment by the police. "Tiny" was Miss Vogel's pet name for her brother, Aaron, of 208 South Seventh street, Newark. He told the authorities that his sister had recently complained of being tired and had spoken of taking a vacation.

The note addressed to the County Physician said: "You'll never find out what caused me to do this. Please take extra precautions not to disarrange my hair, which I had waved for this occasion, nor to disturb my clothing."

The second note, after repeating virtually these statements, added: "Because of prohibition I have decided to use Mr. McCarter's weak gas. It will take a little longer, but I will have the flat wheels of his trolley cars for music while I wait."

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